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ABSTRACT

A study reports on the Nevada Even Start Family Literacy Program (NEST), which provides educational opportunities to parents and children as a family unit through core services such as adult, parenting, and early childhood education. Questions asked in the study were who the program serves, what services are received, how funding is allocated, how the program is implemented, and what results come from the program. Subjects included 328 families, comprised of 365 adults and 509 children. Results indicated that families are primarily poor and face multiple social and economic disadvantages. Findings suggest that the program foundation is laid, that important and needed services are being provided, and that the program positively affected participants in early childhood development, adult literacy, and parenting skills. Additional research will more accurately determine the benefits the program has upon families. (Contains 16 notes, and 36 tables and 14 figures.) (EF)

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NEVADA EVEN START FAMILY LITERACY PROJECTS

1998-99

Final Evaluation Report

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Executive Summary

The 1997 Nevada State Legislature authorized funding for the Nevada Even Start Family Literacy Program (NEST) modeled after the national Even Start program. It is a voluntary literacy program that builds on family strengths. The Even Start program provides educational services to parents and children as a family unit. The model is designed to improve the educational opportunities of low-income families, and ultimately, to help break the cycle of poverty. To qualify for Nevada Even Start, parents must be eligible to participate in an adult literacy program under the Adult Education Act, or be in need of basic literacy skills or English acquisition, and have children from birth through age seven.

> The primary reasons adults participated in Nevada Even Start were to learn English and to be better parents.

The program's family-orientated approach is exemplified by its interrelated goals: (1) to help parents improve their basic skills; (2) to help parents become full partners in the education of their children; and (3) to assist children in reaching their full potential as learners. All Even Start projects are expected to provide services in three core service areas: adult education, parenting education, and early childhood education. In addition, projects are to emphasize "parent and child together time," also known as PACT time. Projects provide some of these services directly to families. Other services are provided by project partners that collaborate with Even Start. In addition to core services, Even Start projects may offer a range of "support services" designed to enable families to participate in the core services such as transportation and child care.

In December 1997, the Nevada Department of Education awarded Nevada Even Start Family Literacy Program (NEST) funds to seven projects through a competitive application process. Most projects, after selecting and training staff, began to provide services from February to April 1998. School districts operate three of the seven projects: Carson City, Nye County, and Pershing County. One project is operated by the Moapa Band of Paiutes, and the three other projects are operated by non-profit agencies, including Job Opportunities in Nevada (JOIN) in Reno, Variety Day Home in Las Vegas, and Class-

room on Wheels in Las Vegas. Each project has several collaborators. Families are referred to the programs from the many cooperating agencies and programs involved in each project.

Even though the Even Start projects have only operated for little over a full calendar program year, the seven projects have already provided services to 328 families, including 365 adults and 509 children.

The State Evaluation. The purpose of the statewide evaluation is to describe the population of the program and to report the results of data collected on three program goals in early childhood education, adult literacy, and parenting skills. The state evaluation was designed to address four major questions.

1. Who is served by the program and what services do they receive? (Does the program reach the appropriate population?)
2. How is the state funding spent on the program?
3. How do projects implement Even Start?
4. What are the outcomes of Even Start?

The State Evaluation includes two reports: an Interim Evaluation Report and a Final Evaluation Report. The Interim Report (released in January 1999) presented data on all four questions but included only pretest data on outcomes for program participants. ***The Final Evaluation Report contains everything in the Interim Report and pre- and post-test data on participant outcomes.***

Participant Recruitment. To be eligible to receive Even Start services, a family must have at least one parent who qualifies for adult education under the Adult Education Act and have at least one child birth through age seven. In addition, all projects used supplemental criteria to target and recruit families. Specifically, projects targeted—

- families with children three to five years old (7 projects),
- recent immigrant or limited English proficiency adults and children (6 projects), and
- parents already enrolled in services with a collaborating agency (6 projects).

Most projects easily located eligible families to participate in the program as evidenced by the fact that most projects reached capacity by the Fall 1998. In fact, most projects re-

lied primarily on "word of mouth" strategies to contact potentially eligible families, followed by posters and flyers, and home visits.

Even Start Participants. The general profile of Even Start families is that they are primarily poor and face multiple social and economic disadvantages, including limited educational experiences, low-paying career tracks, and, for many, limited English proficiency. Even Start provides these families an important opportunity to improve their lives by improving their basic literacy and parenting skills and by providing developmentally supportive experiences for their children. In fact, the primary reason that adults participated in Even Start was to learn English. In addition, parents cited two other reasons frequently: to be a better parent and to get their children into a preschool program.

Even Start projects are expected to serve the families most in need. The characteristics of Even Start families show that projects, in fact, met that target. A majority of Even Start adults (180 adults or 52 percent) had reached only ninth grade or below before enrolling in Even Start. The second largest group 116 adults or 32 percent) had 10 to 12 years of schooling but had not completed high school. In addition, almost two-thirds of Even Start adults (238 adults or 66 percent) were educated outside the United States (primarily in Mexico).

Even Start families represent the poorer segment of the population even though income level was not a criterion for eligibility. Almost three-quarters of Even Start families have incomes under $20,000. In addition, most Even Start children (321 children or 63 percent) did not participate in any educational program before participating in Even Start.

Even Start families represent the poorer segment of the population even though income level was not a criterion for eligibility.

The typical Even Start family included two parents—representing over 73 percent of families (237 families). Single parents headed 68 families (21 percent). The adult Even Start population is primarily female: 313 females (86 percent) vs. 52 males (14 percent). Most adult participants were between 20 to 29 years of age (167 adults or 46 percent) followed by adults between 30 and 39 years of age 118 adults or 32 percent). In addition,

Even Start included a substantial teen parent population: 28 teen parents or 8 percent. The ethnic composition of Even Start adults was primarily Hispanic representing 77 percent (281 adults) of the adult population. Over two-thirds of Even Start adults (256 adults or 70 percent) spoke Spanish as their primarily language.

The largest percentage of Even Start adults were employed either full time or part-time—145 adults or 40 percent. A smaller percentage were unemployed (117 adults or 32 percent) or full-time homemakers (88 adults or 24 percent). In addition, the majority of Even Start adults were in low-paying career tracks in the service industry (151 adults out of the 220 adults who reported or 69 percent).

Overall, Even Start programs primarily served children from 3 through 5 years old (252 children or 50 percent). Approximately 26 percent of children were under three years of age and 19 percent over 5 years of age. Like their parents, most Even Start children were Hispanic (404 children or 79 percent) and spoke Spanish at home (339 children or 67 percent).

Even Start Program Development. An important way to help develop a quality Even Start program is to draw upon effective programs and practices when planning and developing program activities. Almost all Nevada Even Start projects relied upon at least one research-based model to develop program activities. Primarily, projects used the Parents as Teachers (PAT) model to provide early education services to Even Start children. In addition, four projects reported they developed their own model suggesting that projects incorporated commercial programs as well as developing their own activities to best serve the needs of their families.

Even Start Program Implementation. The "average" project[1] has about 6.3 staff—many of whom are part-time. Projects have an average of one administrator, 1.5 instructors, 1.1 instructional aides, 1.5 family specialists, 0.5 evaluator, and .7 administrative support person. Even Start instructors have a higher education level and more ex-

[1] One project was not included in the average since it included 31 staff that would have greatly overestimated the average number of staff across projects.

perience than aides. Sixty percent of the instructors have at least a college degree while 67 percent of the aides have at least a high school diploma or GED certificate. In addition, 60 percent of the instructors have at least five years of experience while 67 percent of the aides have one to five years of experience.

Even Start staff received adequate training to implement Even Start programs. Every Even Start staff who had direct contact with Even Start families, except one instructor, received at least 16 to 40 hours of inservice on Even Start related issues. In fact, 33 of the 56 staff who have direct contact with Even Start families had over two weeks of training. Although staff received training in all three core service areas, Even Start projects devoted more training to topics related to parenting education followed by early childhood education because most projects provided parenting education and early education services while relying more upon their collaborators to deliver adult education.

Even Start projects identified four barriers to successful implementation: improving attendance, improving retention or motivation of participants, recruiting eligible families, and coordinating with other agencies.

Intensity of Services. The number of hours Even Start projects provide services to program participants is an important variable in determining the potential impact of the program. The more hours of service offered, the greater the likelihood the program will impact participants positively. For the most part, projects will provide an average of almost 10 months of service in a program year—similar to federal Even Start projects.

On average, projects will provide between 101 and 150 hours per year of adult education depending upon the education level, 66 hours of parenting education, and between 60 and 75 hours per year of early childhood education depending upon the age group. In comparison, Even Start projects in the national evaluation of federal Even Start programs provided between 311 and 367 hours per year of adult education depending upon the education level, 195 hours of parenting education, and between 350 and 557 hours per year of early childhood education depending upon the age group. Part of the difference between Nevada and federal Even Start projects in scheduled parenting education hours is

that most Nevada Even Start projects used a video-based parenting program (i.e., *Bowdoin Parenting Program*) that parents watch at home. These "at home" hours are not included in the scheduled parenting hours. In terms of early childhood education (ECE), many federal programs provide early childhood services through center-based programs that operate daily. Most Nevada Even Start projects, on the other hand, are home-based programs that provide early childhood education, on average, two to three times a month during home-visits.

Levels of Participation. It is important to distinguish between services offered by projects and participation in services. Overall, Even Start adults participated in 55 hours of adult education during an average of 4.5 months. English as a Second Language (ESL) and GED preparation were the two most commonly attended adult education programs. Even Start adults also participated in an average of 23 hours of parenting education during an average of 4.7 months.

Even Start children participated in early childhood education services an average of 113 hours over an average of 6.2 months. Individualized, home-based ECE and organized, center-based ECE were the two most commonly attended early childhood programs. Please note that although Nevada Even Start participation rates are less than national Even Start participation rates, the number of months that Nevada Even Start participants have been in the program is less than the numbers of months that participants were in national Even Start programs. We expect Nevada Even Start's level of participation would have been higher if the evaluation period ended in June rather than March, as is typically the case.

Retention and Reasons for Leaving. Nevada Even Start projects have retained the large majority of families in the program. Seventy-three percent of Even Start families (239 of 328 families) who enrolled since the projects began were still in the program when data were collected in March 1999. Of the 89 families who left the program, the most common reason (29 families) for leaving was that the family moved out of the area served by the Even Start program. The next most common reason was that the adults found full-time employment (13 families).

Educational and Developmental Outcomes of Even Start. The primary purpose of the state evaluation is accountability—to relate program participation in Even Start to educational and developmental outcomes for adults and children. The evaluation investigated three types of educational/developmental outcomes: child cognitive development, adult education, and parenting. Overall, Nevada Even Start participants made larger gains in the outcome measures than participants in similar family literacy programs.

Overall, Nevada Even Start participants made larger gains in the outcome measures than participants in similar family literacy programs.

In childhood development, Nevada Even Start children made larger gains than children in similar family literacy programs in auditory comprehension, expressive communication, and school readiness. Although Nevada Even Start children also made gains in receptive vocabulary, the gains were smaller than the gains made by children in similar family literacy programs.

In adult education, Nevada Even Start adults made larger gains than adults in similar programs in reading and listening achievement, and made above average gains in parenting skills. Nevada Even Start adults also increased the amount of time they spent with their children, including reading to or with them, by the end of the evaluation period than when they enrolled in the program.

Nevada Even Start adults spent more time with their children, including reading with or to them, by the end of the program than when they enrolled into the program.

Conclusions.

It is important to remember that the seven Nevada Even Start projects are only in the first year of implementation. Most first-year program evaluations, rightfully so, are process evaluations that focus on program implementation, highlighting strengths and weaknesses for improvement. With that caveat in mind, we found that overall projects have laid the foundation for the program (e.g., providing adequate staff training) and are providing important and needed services to families, adults, and children. In addition, perhaps most importantly, Even Start positively impacted program participants in early childhood development, adult literacy, and parenting skills. These statements are based on several

conclusions we discovered about the program development, implementation, and outcomes. They include—

- Data show that Even Start services are helping to improve parents reading and parenting skills and children's language development and school readiness. Even Start showed positive gains on all adult and child test measures with the majority of gains being moderate to large.

- Projects drew upon some effective research-based programs to develop services in parenting education and early childhood education. Although adopting an effective research-based program does not guarantee success, it does increase the likelihood that projects will provide quality services to their participants—and thus increases the chances of success.

- Projects provided adequate training to staff in the models the projects adopted and in family literacy so staff can offer quality services to families, adults, and children. An important task in developing an effective family literacy program is to ensure staff have the necessary skills to work in an integrated family literacy model. The seven Nevada Even Start Projects have achieved this objective.

- Projects recruited eligible families to participate in Even Start. Most families have multiple economic and social disadvantages (e.g., limited educational experience, limited English proficiency, low-paying career tracks) and can benefit from the services offered to them. Even Start adults have basic or beginning literacy levels, and Even Start children are below their peers on key indicators of school readiness including auditory comprehension, expressive communication, and receptive vocabulary.

- For many families, Even Start appears to be the only structured opportunity to better prepare their children for school. Most children from Even Start families did not participate in any preschool or toddler program before Even Start and most children are not now participating in any other program while in Even Start.

- Projects seemed to have established working relationships with collaborating agencies and partners even though projects still see developing collaborations as one the major challenges in developing and maintaining an Even Start program. Collaborators and partners provide some of the required services in the three core service areas—primarily in adult education services.

> Without Even Start, the children may not have participated in any educational program before enrolling in school. For many children, Even Start was the only structured strategy they participated in to better prepare them for school.

- Even Start adults and children seemed to have been adequately screened by most projects so they are placed in and receive appropriate services.

- Most projects offer a sufficient number of scheduled hours of adult education, parenting education, and early childhood education to positively impact Even Start adults and children. The number of scheduled hours, however, is below the average number of scheduled hours of many similar projects in the national Even Start program. This fact suggests that Even Start participants will have to attend the existing scheduled program activities regularly to realize expected outcomes.

- Projects have retained a large percentage of the families who enrolled in Even Start since they began to provide services, i.e., January to April 1998, even though retention is seen as a major barrier to program implementation. This suggests families are satisfied with the services they are receiving.

- Some of the main barriers projects encountered when developing and implementing their programs included recruiting eligible families, coordinating with other programs, improving the retention and motivation of participants, and improving participant attendance.

The overall conclusion we can draw from the Final Evaluation Report is that most projects seem to be "on-track" to developing effective family literacy programs and that cur-

rent Even Start families already benefit from these services. The benefit of the program to families, although already evident, will be most accurately determined after the projects have additional time to refine program operations and fine-tune services.

Chapter I. Introduction

The 1997 Nevada State Legislature authorized funding for the Nevada Even Start Family Literacy Program (NEST) which is modeled after the national Even Start program. It is a voluntary literacy program that builds on family strengths. The program is designed to help parents become full partners in the education of their children and to help parents and their children reach their full potential as learners. To be eligible for Nevada Even Start, parents must be eligible to participate in an adult literacy program under the Adult Education Act, or are in need of basic literacy skills or English acquisition, and have children from birth through age seven.

Even Start projects are required to provide families with an integrated program of early childhood education, adult literacy, and parenting education. The program's design is based on the theory that these components build on each other and families need to receive all three services, not just one or two, to effect lasting change and improve children's school success. The program allows projects flexibility in devising services that meet local needs, but projects are required to offer all three core services in either a home-based or center-based setting. Each family is required to participate in all core services.

- *Early childhood education:* high-quality, intensive services to meet the early education needs of children from birth through seven years of age, designed to enhance development and prepare children for success in school.

- *Adult education:* high-quality, intensive services that develop the basic educational and literacy skills of the adult including adult basic education, adult secondary education, English as a second language, or preparation to attain a General Education Development (GED) certificate.

- *Parenting education*: high quality, intensive services for parents to enhance parent-child relationships and help parents understand and support their child's growth and development.

In addition to core services, Even Start projects provide a range of "support services" — some of which are designed to help families to participate in the core services. Examples

of support services are transportation, child care, health care, nutrition assistance, mental health referral, referrals for employment, advocacy assistance with governmental agencies, and counseling. To avoid duplication of services, Nevada Even Start guidelines encourage projects to obtain all core and support services from existing providers when possible.

Finally, Even Start projects often provide "special events" for participants. They may be one-time events such as a potluck supper, or they may include occasional activities or demonstrations on subjects of interest to participating families, e.g., visiting the local library.

Overview of Nevada Even Start Projects

In September 1998, the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) announced a Request for Proposals to operate state-funded Even Start projects. Local educational agencies (i.e., school districts) in partnership with a non-profit community-based agency, a public agency other than a local educational agency, an institution of higher education, or a public or private nonprofit organization other than a local educational agency were eligible to apply.[2]

Table 1 shows the seven Even Start projects that NDE funded based on the competitive application process. Table 1 also contains the projects' partners, the amount of funds projects spent for program operations in 1997-98, and the amount of funds the projects received in 1998-99. Overall, the seven projects spent $794,500 in 1997-98 and received $827,971 in 1998-99 for a total of $1,622,471 over the two years of the program.

[2] Partners are jointly responsible for program operations and compliance, and often contribute in-kind services.

Table 1. Nevada Even Start projects

Sponsor Agency	Partner	Spent 1997-98	Awarded 1998-99
Carson City School District	Western Nevada Community College, Carson City School District Adult Education, Nevada Hispanic Services	$100,200	$121,700
Classroom on Wheels	Clark County School District, Priori Enterprise, Inc.	$124,944	$117,955
Job Opportunities in Nevada (JOIN)	Washoe County School District	$120,089	$121,700
Moapa Band of Paiutes	Ute Perkins Elementary School, University of Nevada—Las Vegas	$123,420	$121,697
Nye County School District	Tonopah Family Resource Center	$125,000	$112,300
Pershing County School District	Rural Mental Health, University of Nevada—Reno Cooperative Extension, Pershing County Reading Center	$125,000	$121,700
Variety Day Home	Clark County School District	$75,797	$110,919
Total		$794,500	$827,971

Organization of this Report

Following this chapter, *Chapter II: Even Start Evaluation* describes the components of the statewide evaluation of Even Start. *Chapter III: Even Start Program Implementation* provides additional project level information about the administrative context of Even Start projects including the level of resources, staffing patterns, problems or challenges to implementing the Even Start model, and issues for which projects need technical assistance. *Chapter IV: Even Start Participant Characteristics* presents detailed descriptions of Even Start families, adults, and children. *Chapter V: Even Start Services* describes the educational services projects offer to participating families. The next chapter, *Chapter VI: Participation in Services* reports the participation outcomes of parents and children in all components of the educational services. This chapter helps distinguish between the services projects offer and the extent to which the families participate in services.

Chapter VII: Participant Outcomes presents data on the educational progress of partici-

pants. Specifically, the Final Evaluation Report presents the gains for adults on adult literacy and parenting education and for children on early childhood education. Please note that these data can not provide the most accurate picture of the impact of Nevada Even Start on participants since many program participants have been in the program for only a few months. It is also difficult to obtain a completely accurate picture of any program based on the first year of implementation. For example, the national evaluation of Even Start Family Literacy Programs only included projects in their second year of operation.

Chapter VIII: Testimonials provides a description written by Even Start families of the benefits Even Start families received. Finally, *Chapter VIII: Conclusions* presents the conclusions of Even Start implementation based on the results reported in all previous chapters of this report.

Chapter II. Even Start Evaluation

The 1997 Nevada State Legislature, in a letter to the Nevada Department of Education (NDE), requested an evaluation of the Nevada Even Start Program. The evaluation was to include, "the number of preschoolers and parents served by … the state-funded family literacy projects, describe programs actually supported by these funds, and evaluate the progress made by children and their parents as a result of these programs." The evaluation design presented in this chapter was developed in response to the Legislature's request.

The purpose of the evaluation of the Nevada Even Start Family Literacy Program is to assess the impact of the program and to improve program operations. To achieve this goal, NDE developed a comprehensive three-part evaluation: a statewide evaluation, an independent local evaluation, and six-month progress reports. The specific aims of each part of the evaluation are:

- ✓ Statewide evaluation—to describe program characteristics and participant characteristics and determine the progress of program participants for the purpose of *program accountability.*
- ✓ Independent local evaluation—to describe the projects based on ten quality indicators of effective family literacy programs for the purpose of *program improvement.*
- ✓ Six-month progress reports—to provide the Nevada Even Start Coordinator with information on project implementation for the purpose of *program monitoring.*

This report presents the results of the statewide evaluation.[3] The statewide evaluation design includes the collection of both descriptive and outcome data on the characteristics of the program and its participants, and on program outcomes.

The Nevada Department of Education established an Early Childhood Evaluation Design Team to identify research questions to guide the evaluation of the Nevada Even Start Program. The Evaluation Design Team identified four primary research questions:[4]

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[3] Projects submitted the local evaluation and six-month progress reports to the Nevada Department of Education.

1. Who is served by the program and what services do they receive? (Does the program reach the appropriate population?)
2. How is the state funding spent on the program?
3. How do projects implement Even Start? (Do projects meet implementation guidelines?)
4. What are the outcomes of Even Start? (Do program participants perform better on key measures than persons who do not participate in the program or persons who participate in similar programs?)

The four research questions are based, in part, on information requested by the Nevada State Legislature. In addition, the Evaluation Design Team generated other research questions, drawing partly from research questions in the evaluation of the National Even Start Program. The four primary research questions are restated below, along with sub-questions. Together, these questions and sub-questions guided data collection for the statewide evaluation. The evaluation contractor developed the Nevada Even Start Reporting System to collect data for the evaluation. The reporting system included a computer database that projects use to keep records about Even Start participants and a survey that project directors completed about program staff and program operations.

Research Question # 1

Who is served by the program and what services do they receive? (Is the program reaching the appropriate population?)

A key concern of the Nevada State Legislature is to describe the Even Start projects and the people who participate in them. This research question addresses the Legislature's concern by focusing on the participants and the services they received. Specific sub-questions to be addressed under this primary research question are listed below.

- What are the characteristics of families participating in Even Start?
- What are the background characteristics of Even Start adults (e.g., gender, age, race/ethnicity, employment status, and primary language)? How do the

[4] The Evaluation Design Team identified a fifth research question (i.e., What are effective practices and programs?) and suggested that this question be investigated if the program is funded for a second biennium, FY 2000 and 2001.

characteristics of project adults compare to the characteristics of adults in similar programs?

- What is the educational history of Even Start adults? What percentage enters with a high school diploma or GED?
- What are the background characteristics of the children who participate in Even Start (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, presence of disability, and primary language)? How do the characteristics of project children compare to the characteristics of children in similar programs?
- What is the educational history of Even Start children?
- How many families participate in Even Start?
- How long (how many months) do families participate?
- On average, what is the intensity (hours) of the services *provided* in the three core service areas?

Research Question # 2

How is the state funding spent on the program?

This research question addresses the concern of how program dollars are used at the local level. It provides both program-level and project-level data on the amount of state and local expenditures on Even Start. The specific sub-questions are listed below.

- What is the state cost for Even Start projects?
- What services are purchased with Even Start funds?
- What services are contributed "in-kind" by Even Start collaborators?

Research Question # 3

How does Even Start work? (Do projects meet implementation guidelines?)

This question focuses on a range of implementation issues. An important issue is to determine whether projects are fully implemented. The specific sub-questions are listed below.

- How are families recruited into Even Start? How do projects target recruitment?

- What is the nature of services in early childhood education, adult education, and parenting education offered by the project? What activities does the project offer for parents and children together?
- What is the educational background of Even Start staff? What kinds of training have Even Start staff received to implement a family literacy program effectively? How many volunteers participate in the program?
- What types of collaborations exist between Even Start and other agencies? What types of agencies are collaborators?
- What barriers exist to successful implementation?
- To what extent do adults and children *participate* in Even Start core service areas?

Research Question # 4

What are the outcomes of Even Start? (Do program participants perform better on key measures than persons who do not participate in the program or persons who participate in similar programs?)

This set of research questions is designed to address the impact of the program on child and adult literacy levels, parenting education, and on parent-child relationships. The specific sub-questions are listed below.

- What gains are observed for Even Start children on measures of school readiness, vocabulary, and English acquisition?
- What gains are observed for Even Start adults on measures of functional literacy and parenting skills?
- With what degree of confidence can observed gains be attributed to Even Start rather than to other factors? What can be said of Even Start participants' progress vs. progress made by participants in other programs?

Chapter III. Even Start Program Implementation

This chapter presents a first look at the Even Start programs and how they are implemented by examining their administrative and operational issues. The chapter examines staffing patterns, inservice training, interagency collaborations, barriers to program implementation, and technical assistance needs.

Staffing Patterns

Project directors were asked to report the number of paid Even Start staff and full-time equivalents (FTE) of the current staff in the program. To avoid duplicating staff counts, we asked project directors to count each staff member only once in his or her primary assignment area even though many staff members perform multiple roles and functions. Table 2 presents the number of staff across the seven projects and their FTE.

Table 2. The number of paid Even Start staff

Staff	Number of Staff	FTE of Staff	Average Number of Staff
Administrator	9	3.8	1.0
Instructor (teacher, tutor)	25	6.6	1.5
Aide (educational assistant)	9	3	1.1
Family Specialists (home-visitor, case manager)	13	9.25	1.5
Evaluators (data collection and analysis, testing)	8	2.3	.5
Others (secretary, clerk, media staff)	5	2	.7
TOTAL STAFF	69	26.95	6.3

On average, projects have about 6.3 staff—most of whom are part-time. Most projects have one person who serves as project administrator. The typical Even Start also has a teaching staff of 1.5. The reason for this is that most projects are home-based rather than center-based and rely on collaborators to provide instructional staff for adult education

[5] One project, Moapa Band of Paiutes, was excluded from calculating an average since the project has 31 staff—all part-time—which would overestimate the average number of staff across projects.

services. As a result, several Even Start projects do not have instructors.

Other staff include an average of about 1.1 teacher aides; 1.5 family specialists who took responsibility for recruitment, case management, home-visits, etc; .5 evaluator, who was responsible for the required local evaluation that focused on program improvement; and about .7 other staff member who typically fulfilled an administrative support function.

We also asked project directors to report how many of their Even Start paid instructors and volunteers teach adult education, parenting education, or early childhood education. If an instructor or volunteer works in more than one area, he or she could be counted in all the relevant educational areas. However, each individual was counted only once in the total number of Even Start paid instructors or the total number of volunteers.

Table 3 shows that with the exception of one project that reported 16 instructors, most projects have about 1.5 instructors who teach primarily in early childhood education. This result suggests that Even Start projects rely on collaborating agencies to provide adult education. The table also shows that projects had a total of 33 volunteers,[6] ranging from 1 to 18 volunteers. Most volunteers, on the other hand, worked in adult education.

Table 3. The number of instructors and volunteers by core service area

Instructional Area	Instructors		Volunteers	
	Total Number[7]	Average Number[8]	Total Number	Average Number
Adult Education	6 (2)	.3	19	2.7
Parenting Education	8 (5)	.8	2	.3
Early Childhood Education	16 (7)	1.1	6	.9
Program Support			7	1
Total	25 (9)	1.5	33	4.7

[6] Washoe County School District received a grant from the Corporation for National Service to provide a VISTA (Volunteers in Service in America) for all Nevada Even Start projects.

[7] The number in parentheses represents the number of instructors from six of the seven projects.

[8] Again, one project, Moapa Band of Paiutes, was excluded from this average since the project has 16 part-time instructors that would overestimate the average number of staff positions across projects.

Professional Qualifications

Project directors reported the qualifications of their instructors and aides in terms of their highest level of education and years of professional experience in the areas they teach. Table 4 shows that instructors have a higher education level than aides. Sixty percent of Even Start instructors have earned a college degree and 40 percent have a high school diploma or a GED. For teacher aides, 67 percent have a high school diploma or a GED and 33 percent do not have a high school degree or GED.

Instructors have more relevant experience than aides. Almost all instructors (96%) have over one year of experience: 60 percent have at least five years of experience. On the other hand, 67 percent of the teacher aides have 1 to 5 years of experience and 33 percent have less than one year.

Table 4. Education and experience of instructors and aides

	Percent of Instructors (N=25)	Percent of Aides (N=9)
Highest Level of Education Completed		
Did not complete diploma or GED	0	33
High school diploma or GED	40	67
AA	16	0
BA/BS	28	0
MA/MS/M.Ed	16	0
Ph.D./Ed.D	0	0
Years of Experience		
Less than 1 year	4	33
1-5 years	32	67
5-10 years	56	0
More than 10 years	8	0

Inservice Training

Inservice training is an important part of providing quality services to Even Start families so that staff can learn about family literacy and receive training in the program models

(e.g., Parents as Teachers) that Even Start projects adopt. The results show that projects spent a substantial amount of resources to properly train staff in family literacy. Table 5 presents the number of days of training Even Start staff received. It shows that all staff received some training and that most staff received a substantial amount of training. Specifically, the majority of administrators (67%), instructors (80%), and family specialists (92%) received at least 5 to 10 days of training during 1998. Most aides (78%) received 2 to 5 days of training.

Table 5. Training days for Even Start staff

Staff Assignment	Days of Training					Total Staff
	None	1 day	2-5 days	5-10 days	11 + days	
Administrators (coordinators)	0	0	3	2	4	9
Instructors (teachers, tutors)	0	1	4	2	18	25
Family Specialists (home-visitors)	0	0	1	3	9	13
Aides	0	0	7	0	2	9

Next, we asked project directors to indicate the training staff received in five areas. We found that projects trained the highest percentage of their staff in parenting education, early childhood education, and program coordination. Project staff received less training in adult education and family characteristics.

Training in Program Coordination. Training in program coordination covers a wide range of topics from recruitment, state and local evaluation, to first aid and CPR. Table 6 shows the number of projects that provided percentages of staff with training in different areas of program coordination. Almost without exception, projects trained some staff in all categories of program coordination. Most projects trained almost all to all staff (76-100% staff) in *Planning/program improvement, Conducting home visits, Recruitment,* and *Retention strategies*. In addition, most projects trained at least half their staff in *Team building* and *Interagency collaborations*. Fewer than half the projects trained less than half their staff on *Local program evaluation, Statewide program evaluation,* and *Visiting other programs*.

The only exceptions in which some projects did not train any staff were that five projects did not train any staff in *First Aid, CPR, or emergency procedures;* two projects did not have any staff *Visit other programs;* and one project did not train staff in *Recruitment* and *Retention strategies*.

Table 6. The percent of staff trained in program coordination

Program Coordination Inservice Topics	*No staff*	*0-25% Staff*	*26-50% Staff*	*51-75% Staff*	*76-100% Staff*
Recruitment	1	1	0	1	4
Retention strategies	1	0	0	2	4
Team building	0	1	0	3	3
Interagency collaboration	0	2	1	1	3
Local program evaluation	0	2	2	1	2
Statewide program evaluation	0	3	1	1	2
Planning/program improvement	0	1	1	0	5
Conducting home visits	0	1	1	0	5
Visiting other programs	2	2	1	0	2
First Aid, CPR, or emergency procedures	5	0	0	1	1

Training in Adult Education. Consistent with other results presented in this report, fewer staff were trained in adult education areas than in other core service areas. Table 7 shows that three projects did not train any staff in *Vocational/occupational* and two projects did not train any staff in *English as a Second Language* or *Reading, writing, math, social studies*. Of adult education topics, *Conducting assessment* emerged as the highest priority: four projects trained 76-100% of their staff in *Conducting assessments*. Fewer than half of any project's staff were trained in the other adult education inservice areas.

Training in Parenting Education. Even Start projects devote more training to topics related to parenting education than to any other service area, probably because parenting education is the least likely to be available to families through other service providers. All seven projects trained at least half their staff in three parenting education inservice topics: *Parent's role as teacher, Parent and child activities,* and *Child rearing, child develop-*

ment. Four projects trained 76-100% of their staff on *Life skills* but three projects trained less than half their staff on *Life skills.*

Table 7. The percent of staff trained in key service areas

Key Service Areas	*No staff*	*0-25% Staff*	*26-50% Staff*	*51-75% Staff*	*76-100% Staff*
Adult Education					
ESL	2	2	0	1	2
Reading, writing, math, social studies	2	1	1	1	2
Vocational/occupational	3	3	1	0	0
Assessment	0	2	1	0	4
Parenting education					
Parent's role as teacher	0	0	0	2	5
Parent and child activities	0	0	0	2	5
Child rearing, child development	0	0	0	2	5
Life skills *(e.g., consumer awareness, health, nutrition)*	1	1	1	0	4
Early Childhood Education					
ESL	3	1	2	0	1
School readiness	0	0	1	0	6
Child development *(e.g., developmentally appropriate practices)*	0	0	1	0	6
Classroom or behavior management (cow)	1	0	2	0	4
Assessment	0	1	1	1	4
Family Characteristics					
Relating instruction to ethnic/cultural background	1	0	1	1	4
Dealing with family or personal problems *(e.g., family violence, chemical dependency)*	1	0	1	2	3
Adapting instruction for learners with special needs	2	0	2	1	2

Training in Early Childhood Education. Most projects also trained a majority of their staff in early childhood education inservice topics because most projects provided the early childhood education services rather than their collaborators. Six projects trained 76-100 percent of their staff in *School readiness* and *Child development,* and four projects trained 76-100 percent of their staff in *Behavior management* and *Assessment.* The only

inservice area in which the majority of project staff were not trained was *English as a Second Language (ESL)*: six projects trained less than half their staff in this area.

Training in Family Characteristics. A challenge facing all Even Start projects is designing an individually tailored educational plan for each family to accommodate the wide range of needs that families have when they enter the program. To address this challenge, most projects trained over half their staff in *Relating instruction to ethnic/cultural background* and *Dealing with family or personal problems*. Fewer projects trained most of their staff on *Adapting instruction for learners with special needs*, such as dyslexia or learning delays.

Even Start Partners and Collaborators

Even Start partners and collaborators play a critical role in Even Start—providing some services in all three core service areas. Table 8 presents the areas and the extent to which partners provided services in the three core areas. Overall, the results show collaborators

Table 8. Core services provided by collaborating agencies

Core Service Areas	*Not at all*	*Some*	*A lot*	*All*
Adult Education				
Beginning ABE *(0-5.9: CASAS 0-200)*	1	0	1	3
Intermediate ABE *(6.0-8.9: CASAS 201-235)*	1	0	1	3
Adult Secondary Education/GED preparation *(9-12: CASAS over 235)*	1	0	1	4
English as a second language	2	0	3	2
Parenting Education				
Workshops	2	2	3	0
Home-based activities	2	3	1	1
Early Childhood Education				
Home-based activities	3	2	1	1
Center-based programs	2	3	1	0

provide some services more than others. Specifically, most partners and collaborators provide adult education: four project collaborators provided "all" or "a lot" of the *Begin-*

ning ABE, Intermediate ABE, and English as a Second Language instruction. Five project collaborators provided "all" or "a lot of" *Adult Secondary Education*. To a lesser extent, project collaborators provided "some" or "a lot" of services in *Parenting Education* and *Early Childhood Education*.

Project directors were also asked to identify the services that paid Even Start staff provided or were paid for by Even Start funds. Table 9 presents the areas and the extent to which Even Start funds provided services in the three core areas. It shows Even Start tended to provide more of the *Parenting Education* and *Early Childhood Education* than did partners. The only exception was that, as noted earlier, four Even Start projects provided all of the *English as a Second Language* classes for Even Start adults.

Table 9. Core services provided by paid Even Start staff

Core Service Areas	*Not at all*	*Some*	*A lot*	*All*
Adult Education				
Beginning ABE *(0-5.9)*	3	0	0	1
Intermediate ABE *(6.0-8.9)*	4	0	0	1
Adult Secondary Education/ GED *(9-12)*	4	0	0	2
English as a second language	2	0	0	4
Parenting Edueation				
Workshops	2	2	0	3
Home-based activities	2	1	1	3
Early Childhood Education				
Home-based activities	2	1	0	4
Center-based programs	3	1	0	2

In *Parenting Education*, three projects provided "all" parenting education and two more projects provided "some" to "a lot." In *Early Childhood Education*, four projects provided "all" of the home-visits and one provided "some of" them. In addition, two projects provided "all" of the center-based program, while one project provided "some of" it.

Barriers to Implementing Even Start

Table 10 presents a list of 16 potential barriers to successful implementation of Even Start project. We asked project directors to indicate the extent to which they present a barrier to Nevada Even Start projects. As a whole, project directors did not identify any major barriers. The four issues that received the highest total ratings (on a 5-point scale) were: *Improving attendance* (17 points), *Improving retention or motivation of participants* (16 points), *Recruiting eligible families* (13 points), and *Coordinating with other agencies* (13 points).

Table 10. Barriers encountered by Even Start programs

Barriers to Implementation	*Not a barrier*				*Major barrier*
Recruiting eligible families	3	0	3	1	0
Recruiting families most in need	3	0	4	0	0
Improving retention or motivation of participants	0	1	4	2	0
Coordinating with other agencies	3	2	0	1	1
Obtaining sufficient financial resources	4	2	0	1	0
Improving attendance	1	3	1	2	0
Understanding or meeting state evaluation requirements	3	2	2	0	0
Meeting local evaluation requirements	3	3	1	0	0
Hiring and retaining qualified staff	5	1	0	1	0
Obtaining adequate facilities, space, or equipment	3	2	1	1	0
Arranging or providing adequate transportation	3	2	0	1	1
Meeting social service needs of families	2	4	1	0	0
Finding quality childcare	4	2	0	1	0
Understanding/working within state guidelines	5	1	1	0	0
Understanding/working within the local model	5	1	1	0	0
Finding adult education, parenting education, or early childhood services locally	4	2	0	0	0

The four issues that received the lowest ratings as barriers included *Finding quality childcare* (5 points), *Understanding/working within state guidelines* (5 points), *Understanding/working within the local model* (5 points), and *Finding adult education, parenting education, or early childhood services locally* (4 points).

Technical Assistance Needs

Project directors were also asked to rate their needs for technical assistance in areas of *Program Operations, Educational Support Services, Support Services,* and *Evaluation.* As shown in Table 11, only a few projects reported a "great need" for technical assistance

Table 11. Technical assistance needs of projects in key program areas

Technical Assistance Areas	*No need*	*Some need*	*Great need*
Educational Services			
Sharing information with other projects	4	2	1
Selecting or implementing curriculum materials	5	3	0
Integrating program components	2	5	0
Identifying effective practices in adult education	4	2	1
Identifying effective practices in parenting education	6	0	1
Identifying effective practices in early childhood education	5	2	0
Making home visits	5	2	0
Using computers	4	3	0
Program Operations			
Program administration	6	1	0
Interagency collaboration	5	1	1
Funding or fiscal issues	5	1	1
Recruiting families	2	5	0
Increasing participant involvement or retention	1	5	1
Staff development	4	3	0
Support Services			
Solving transportation problems	4	2	1
Handling social or health problems	3	4	0
Maintaining balance of educational and support services	3	4	0
Evaluation			
Conducting a local evaluation	4	3	0
Complying with the statewide evaluation	4	3	0
Administering and scoring assessment instruments	6	1	0

in any area. Overall, the areas receiving the highest rating for technical assistance were *Support Services* and *Program Operations,* followed by *Educational Services.* Projects rated *Evaluation* the lowest in terms of need for technical assistance.

Projects indicated the most need for technical assistance in three topics: *Increasing participant involvement and retention, Integrating program components,* and *Recruiting families*.

Program Operations. In the area of program operations, projects needed the most technical assistance in *Increasing participant involvement and retention*, cited as a "great need" by one project and "some need" by five projects. Five projects indicated "some need" for technical assistance in *Recruiting families*.

Support Services. Four projects expressed "some need" for technical assistance in *Maintaining a balance of education and support services* and *Handling social or health problems*.

Educational Services. Five projects expressed "some need" for technical assistance in *Integrating program components*. One project expressed a "great need" and two projects expressed "some need" for technical assistance in *Identifying effective practices in adult education* and *Sharing information with other projects*.

Chapter IV. Even Start Participant Characteristics

The characteristics of Even Start participants are based on 328 families, including 365 adults and 509 children who participated in Even Start core services through March 15, 1998. Table 12 shows the number of families, adults, and children served by project.

Table 12. Number of Even Start participants

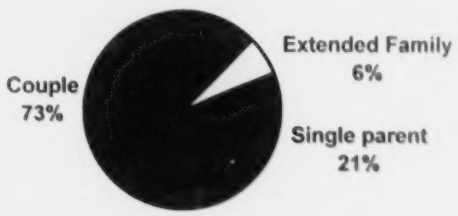
School District	Families	Adults	Children
Carson City	56	58	87
Classroom on Wheels	73	77	115
JOIN	35	39	53
Moapa Band of Paiutes	44	65	61
Nye County	17	17	23
Pershing County	46	47	67
Variety Day Home	57	62	103
Total	**328**	**365**	**509**

Characteristics of Families

Household Composition

The largest percentage of families participating in Even Start described themselves as couples (237 families or 73 percent), followed by single parent families (68 families or 23 percent), and extended family households (23 families or 6 percent). Extended families encompass children living with grandparents, stepparents, or guardians.

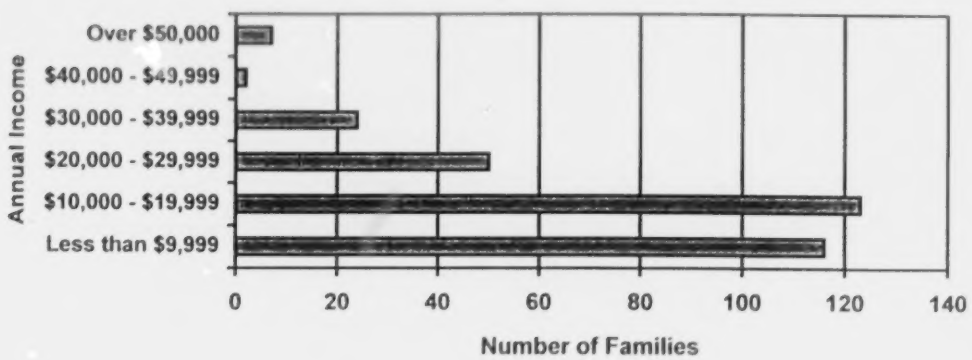
Figure 1. Structure of Even Start families



Family Income Level

Although family income level was not a criterion for Nevada Even Start eligibility, as in the federal Even Start program, a purpose of Nevada Even Start is to help break the cycle

Figure 2. Income of Even Start families

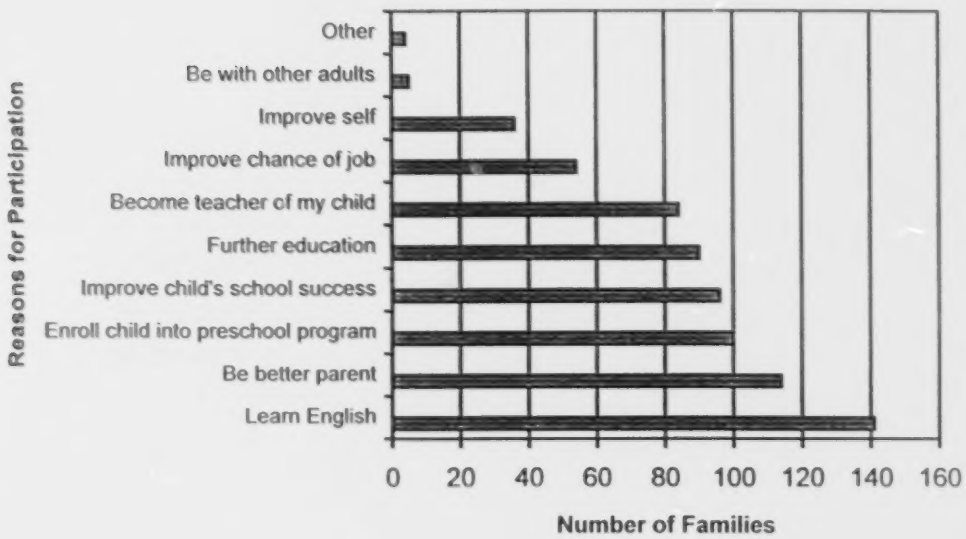


of poverty of participating low-income families. The data collected from families clearly indicate most Even Start families represent the poorer segment of the population. Almost three-quarters of Even Start families (239 families) have incomes under $20,000. Nevada Even Start, thus, served the target population.

Reasons for Participating in Even Start

The primary reason parents gave for enrolling in Even Start was to learn English (141 adults or 39 percent), followed by to be a better parent (114 adults or 31 percent). Other common responses included to enroll their children into an infant/toddler program (100 adults), to improve their child's chance of success (96 adults), and to further their education, such as to obtain a GED (90 adults).

Figure 3. Reasons of participating in Even Start

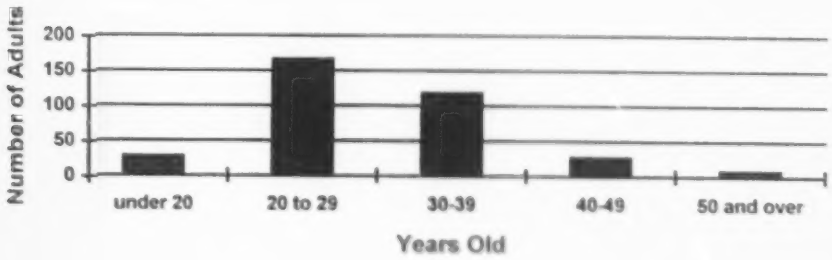


Characteristics of Adults

Age of Participating Adults

Most adults were 20 to 29 years of age (167 adults or 46 percent). Twenty-eight adults (8 percent) were under 20; 118 adults (32 percent) were 30 to 39 years old; 27 adults (7 percent) were 40 to 49years old; and eight adults (2 percent) were over 50 years old. Data were unavailable for seventeen adults (5 percent).

Figure 4. Age of Even Start adults



Gender of Participating Adults

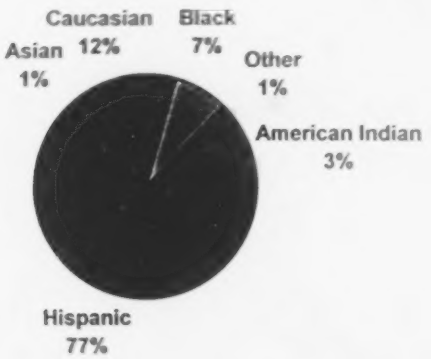
The seven Even Start projects served primarily female adults—consistent with national data on Even Start. Of the 365 adults, 313 (86 percent) were female and 52 (14 percent) were male.

Figure 5. Gender of Even Start adults

Ethnicity of Participating Adults

The seven projects served primarily Hispanic families. Of 365 adults, 281 (77 percent) categorized themselves as Hispanic, 44 (12 percent) as Caucasian, 27 (7 percent) as Black, 10 (3 percent) as American Indian, two adults as "Other," and 1 adult as Asian.

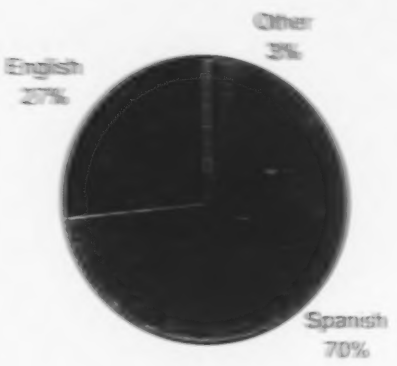
Figure 6. Ethnicity of Even Start adults



Language Spoken at Home

Of the families enrolled in Even Start, over two-thirds (256 adults or 70 percent) reported speaking Spanish at home. This is not surprising since the majority of Even Start families are Hispanic.

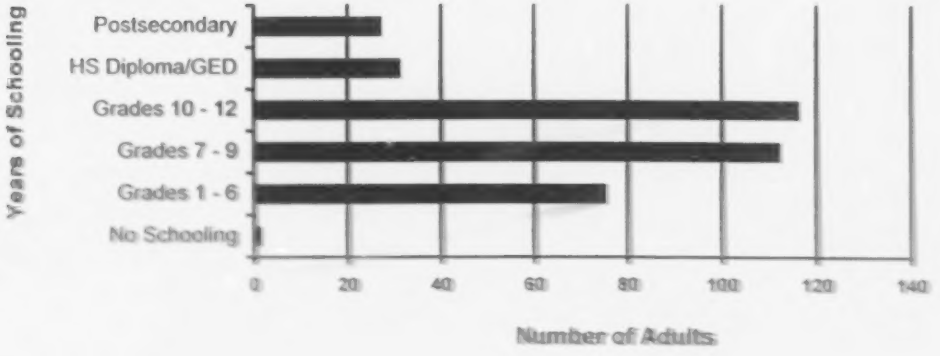
Figure 7. Language of Even Start adults



Educational Attainment of Participating Adults

Adults showed a wide range in "years of schooling" prior to participating in Even Start. The largest percentage of adults had 10 to 12 years of schooling (116 adults or 32 percent) followed by adults who had 7 to 9 years of schooling (114 adults or 31 percent). Seventy-five adults (21 percent) had 1 to 6 years of schooling. A smaller percentage of adults had at least a high school education: 31 adults (9 percent) had a high school diploma or GED. Twenty-seven adults (7 percent) had some college or a college degree. Only two adults had no schooling. Data were unavailable on 2 adults.

Figure 8. Education level of Even Start adults

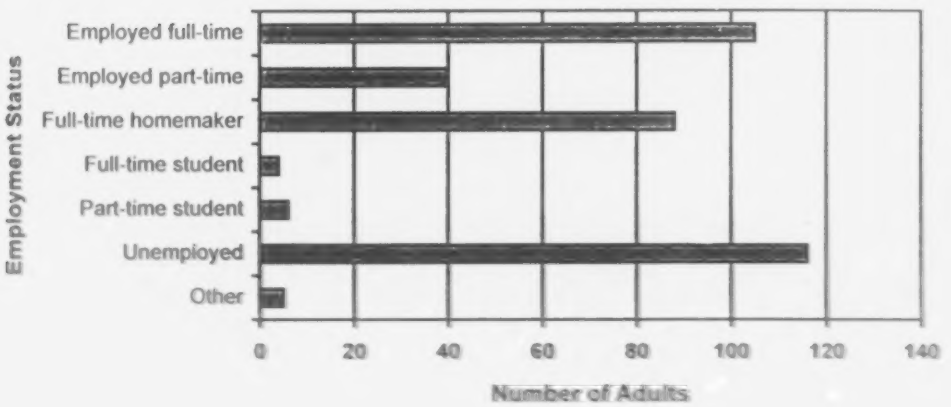


The large majority of adults were not educated in the United States. Almost two-thirds of the adults (258 adults or 66 percent) were educated outside the United States, primarily in Mexico. These figures suggest why adults with postsecondary education decided to participate in Even Start, i.e., to learn English so they can find a better job. Data were unavailable on 11 adults.

Current Employment Status

At the time of the initial interviews, the largest percentage of adults (40 percent) were employed: 105 adults (29 percent) were employed full-time and 40 adults (11 percent) were employed part-time. The second largest group was unemployed: 117 adults or 32 percent. A smaller percentage of adults were full-time homemakers: 88 adults or 24 percent. A much smaller percentage of adults were students: 10 full- and part-time students (3 percent).

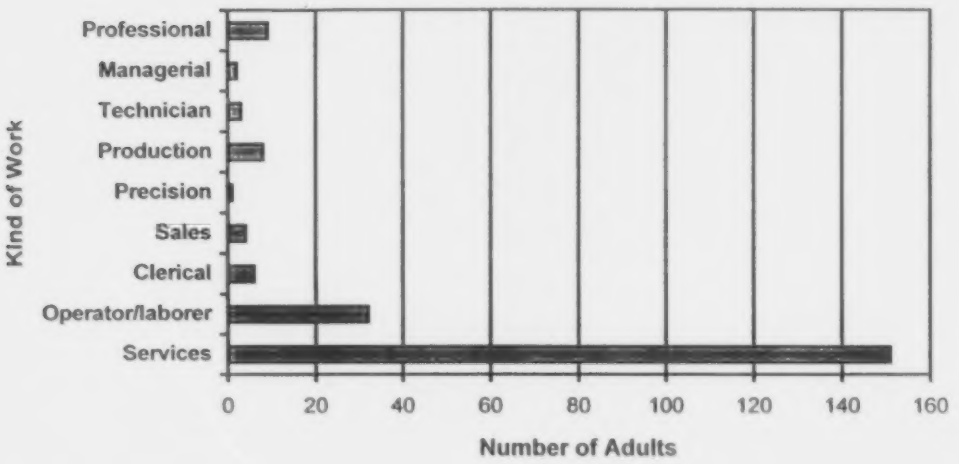
Figure 9. Employment status of Even Start adults



Kind of Work When Employed

The majority of Even Start adults were in low-paying career tracks. Most adults reported they worked primarily in Service positions. Out of the 220 adults which projects reported as having a "kind of work," 151 adults (69 percent) reported working in the Service area. Thirty-two adults (15 percent) reported being an operator/fabricator when employed. Data were not available for many unemployed adults and teen parents.

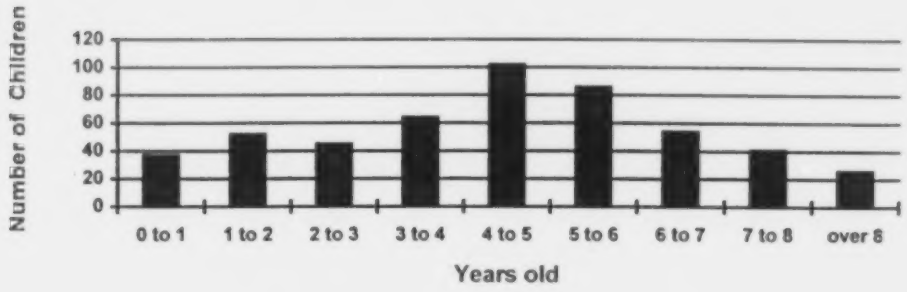
Figure 10. Kind of work of Even Start adults.



Characteristics of Children

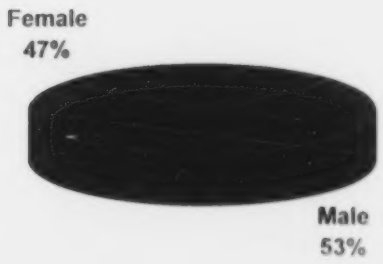
Age. The program served the entire eligible age range of children (birth through 7 years-old); however, almost half the Even Start children were three to five years old. Of the 509 children: 130 children (26 percent) were from birth through age 2; 252 children (50 percent) were 3 through 5 years old; and 95 children (19 percent) were 5 to 7 years old. In addition, the program served 26 siblings (5 percent) who were 8 years of age or over. Data were unavailable for one child.

Figure 11. Age of Even Start children



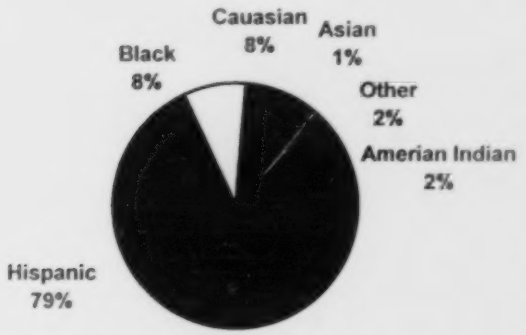
Gender. The seven projects served fairly equal numbers of male and female children. Of 509 children, 272 (53 percent) were male and 237 (47 percent) were female.

Figure 12. Gender of Even Start children



Ethnicity. Of the 509 children, 404 (79 percent) were Hispanic, 42 (8 percent) were Caucasian, 41 (8 percent) were Black, 8 (2 percent) were American Indian, 4 (1 percent) were Asian, and 10 children (2 percent) were "Other."

Figure 13. Ethnicity of Even Start children



Language Spoken at Home

Of the children enrolled in Even Start, almost two-thirds (339 children or 67 percent) speak Spanish at home.

Figure 14. Language of Even Start children

History of Participation in Non-Even Start Programs

Even Start played in important role in the lives of participating children as reflected in the children's level of participation in educational programs before enrolling in Even Start. Approximately 63 percent (321 children) did not participate in other educational programs prior to Even Start, and about 60 percent (307 children) did not participate in other educational programs at enrollment into Even Start. In other words, without Even Start, the children may not have participated in any educational program before enrolling in school. For many children, Even Start was the only structured strategy they participated in to better prepare them for school.

Table 13. Percent of children participating in non-Even Start educational programs before and at intake into Even Start

Non-Even Start Programs	Before Current Even Start	At Intake
Head Start	53	35
Other Even Start	11	
Title I Preschool	10	9
Early Intervention, Early Childhood Special Education	8	3
Other Preschool or Infant/Toddler Program	28	14
Kindergarten	70	73
Primary School (Grades 1-3)	57	62
Other	9	5
None	321	307

The general profile of the Even Start families that emerges from these descriptive analyses is clear. Even Start families are primarily poor and face multiple social and economic disadvantages, including limited educational experiences, low-paying career tracks, and, for many, limited English proficiency. In many ways, Even Start provides these families an important opportunity (and for some the only opportunity) to improve their lives by improving their basic and parenting skills and by providing developmentally supportive experiences for their children.

Chapter V. Even Start Services

Even Start projects are required to provide services in adult basic education, parenting education, and early childhood education, and conduct home-visits to participating families. In addition, projects offer a wide range of support services, such as providing or arranging for transportation and child care which help projects provide core services. This chapter describes aspects of the services provided to families and how they are provided including recruited populations, recruitment strategies, screening procedures, educational models used by local projects, parent and child together (PACT) time, intensity of services, and joint parenting and adult education.

Recruited Populations

To be eligible to receive Even Start services, a family must have at least one parent who qualifies for adult education under the Adult Education Act, or be in need of basic literacy skills or English language acquisition, and have at least one child birth through age seven. Within this general parameter, Even Start projects developed specific approaches to recruit and screen families to participate in their programs.

In addition to serving eligible participants, projects may choose to serve particular groups within the eligible participant pool, such as families with at least one parent who did not complete high school. As shown in Table 14, all projects targeted several groups within the eligible participant pool. A key target group was families with children three to five years old—targeted by all projects. Other targeted groups included recent immigrants or persons with limited English proficiency, and parents who were already enrolled in services with a collaborating agency—targeted by six projects each. In addition, five projects targeted families with children from birth to two years old, children who were already enrolled in services with a collaborating agency, and families who reside in specific housing developments or neighborhoods.

Table 14. Specific populations recruited by Even Start projects

Recruited Populations	Yes	No
Family resides in specific housing development or other neighborhood	5	2
Recent immigrant or limited English proficiency	6	1
Parent did not complete high school	4	3
Single parent	3	4
Teen parent	2	5
Child is infant or toddler (age birth through 2)	5	2
Child is age 3 through 5	7	0
Parent is already enrolled in adult education through a collaborating agency	6	1
Child is already enrolled in early childhood education through a collaborating agency	5	2

Recruitment Strategies

Projects used several strategies to recruit families into the program. As shown in Table 15, the most common strategy (7 projects) for recruitment was "word of mouth" which seven projects "used often." Similarly, six projects used posters and flyers, five projects used home visits, and four projects used telephone contacts and collaborating agencies for recruitment. The least used strategy was targeted mailings—used by one project.

Table 15. Recruitment strategies used by Even Start projects

Recruitment Strategies	*Not used*	*Used little*	*Used some*	*Used often*
Public school referrals (e.g., Title I)	1	1	2	3
Referrals by Head Start or preschool	2	3	2	0
Referrals by community or government agency	2	2	1	2
Walking the neighborhood	1	3	1	1
Home-visits	0	1	1	5
Telephone contact	0	0	3	4
Word of mouth	0	0	0	7
Targeted mailings	6	0	1	0
Mass media	2	1	2	2
Posters or flyers	0	0	1	6
Collaborating agencies	0	0	3	4
Presentations/visits to community agency	0	0	5	0

Screening Procedures

Before applicant families are officially enrolled in Even Start, projects undertake various methods to screen them. The survey results suggest that projects took the necessary steps to serve eligible families and to assess family skills so that adults and children are placed in appropriate services. As shown in Table 16, all projects verified families met basic eligibility criteria (76 to 100% percent of the time). Six projects reported assessing the basic skills of adults and assessing the basic skills of children (76 to 100% percent of the time). To a lesser extent, four projects conducted an orientation and made referrals to help families obtain other needed services (76 to 100% percent of the time).

Table 16. Screening procedures used by Even Start projects

Screening Procedures	0-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-100%
Verify eligibility	0	0	0	7
Conduct an orientation	0	0	3	4
Assess basic skills of adults	0	0	1	6
Assess language development or school readiness of children	0	0	1	6
Contact other agencies involved with families to coordinate services	2	0	3	2
Make referrals	1	2	1	3

Educational Models Used by Local Projects

Even Start projects have the flexibility to tailor the delivery of the three core educational components in ways that best serve the needs of participating families. To determine which models were used to design local programs, we provided project directors with a list of programs and educational models and asked them to select those that were very influential in the design of their projects.

The results in Table 17 show that all projects used at least one, and most projects used several, commercial program in designing their program in each core service area. Some of the commercial programs are effective research-based programs. For example, six projects used the effective research-based program, *Parents as Teachers,* for early child-

hood education. Five projects used the *Bowdoin Method* and four projects used the *Teaching Involved Parenting* program for parenting education. Four projects, however, also reported they developed their own models, suggesting that these projects incorporated both commercially available projects as well as developing their own activities to best serve the needs of their families.

Table 17. Education models used by Even Start programs

Education Models	Number of projects
AVANCE Family Support and Education Program	0
Bowdoin Method	5
Family and Child Education Program (FACE)	0
Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) curriculum	0
High Scope curriculum	0
Kenan Trust Family Literacy Model	1
Parent and Child Education (PACE)	1
Parents as Partners in Reading	0
Parents as Teachers (PAT)	6
Portage home teaching model	0
Project AHEAD	0
Project Home Base	0
Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP/PECES)	1
Locally developed model	5
Teaching Involved Parenting (TIP)	4
University Cooperative Extension	3
Head Start	0
Other model *(specify) —Project LEAF, Churchill Even Start—*	2

Parent and Child Together (PACT) Time

An important part of an Even Start program is the time parents and their children spend together in meaningful interactions, called parent and child together (PACT) time. PACT time allows parents to become increasingly involved in their children's education as well as refining their own parenting skills. To determine the types of activities that projects

conducted with parents and their children together, project directors were asked to identify how frequently PACT activities were used with families.

Overall, Table 18 shows that projects conducted a variety of PACT activities with most families. The most frequently used activities included language development (7), reading or storytelling (7), social development (7), sensory stimulation (6), early academic skills (6), gross motor activities (6), and self-help skills (6). Projects spent less time on PACT activities, such as health and nutrition (3), activities selected and led by the child (3), and computer activities (2).

Table 18. PACT activities used by Even Start projects

PACT Activities	*Not taught*	*Few families*	*Some families*	*Most families*
Sensory stimulation *(auditory, visual, tactile)*	0	0	1	6
Language development *(vocabulary, explain, talk)*	0	0	0	7
Reading, storytelling, pre-reading	0	0	0	7
Working with letters and writing	0	1	2	4
Working with numbers *(counting, number games)*	0	0	2	5
Early academic skills *(shapes, colors, classification)*	0	0	1	6
Computer activities	0	2	3	2
Arts and crafts	0	1	1	5
Gross motor activities	0	0	1	6
Social development *(sharing, working together)*	0	0	0	7
Independence, self-discipline, self-help skills	0	0	1	6
Health and nutrition	0	1	3	3
Activities selected and led by the child	0	1	3	3

To determine the diversity of services provided to parents and their children together, project directors were asked to report the hours per month that a typical Even Start family spends in structured parent-child activities in three settings: home visits, center or classrooms, and field trips, meals, or other social functions.

As shown in Table 19, six projects[9] offered a little over 3 hours of scheduled parent-child activities during home-visits and in the center or classroom monthly, and about one and a half hours of parent-child activities for extracurricular activities, such as field trips and social functions.

Table 19. Hours of structured parent-child activities

Parent-child settings	*Average hours per month*	*Range of Hours Reported*
Parent-child activities during home-visits	3.2	0-4 hrs.
Scheduled parent-child time in center or class-room	3.1	0-6 hrs.
Field trips, meals, or social functions (potlucks)	1.5	0-2 hrs.

Intensity of Services

A very important piece of information is the number of scheduled hours for the typical Even Start participant—for adult education, parenting education, and early childhood education. Typically, the more hours participants spend in program activities, the larger the impact. As a result, it is important that projects offer enough hours of an activity to achieve the desired effect. To determine the intensity of educational services, we asked directors to report: a) scheduled hours per month, (b) duration of instruction in months, and (c) hours per month of services in a home based setting for adult education, parenting education, and early childhood education services. Table 20 reports the average scheduled hours provided for the three core service areas. The number of projects that offered the service is in parentheses. (Some projects did not offer services in all areas.)

Adult Education. Overall, Table 20 shows that Even Start projects provided adults with sufficient opportunities to achieve the desired effect.[10] Adults could receive an average total of 101 hours in *Beginning Adult Education* and 109 hours in *Intermediate Adult Education* in a year. Projects scheduled an average of 150 hours for adults enrolled in

[9] One project did not offer joint parent-child activities at the time of the evaluation.
[10] Developers of the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) suggest that adult students should receive 100 hours of adult education to show a significant gain on the CASAS.

Adult Secondary Education and *English as a Second Language (ESL)*. The total number of hours offered adults in Nevada Even Start is substantially below the number of hours reported by federal Even Start programs. These programs offered an average of over 300 hours per year in adult education: 341 hours of Beginning ABE, 351 hours of Intermediate ABE, 367 hours of Adult Secondary Education, and 311 hours of English as a Second Language.

For the most part, adults attended class outside the home. For example, three projects provided an average of 1.3 hours a month of *Intermediate Adult Education* in the home (for a total of 16 hours). The only exception was for adults enrolled in *ESL*. Here, five projects reported providing an average of 2 hours of ESL instruction per month as part of the home visit—for a total 19 hours.

Table 20. Scheduled hours of adult education, parenting, and early childhood services.

Core Service Area	*Hours per month*	*Duration of instruction in months*	*Total Average Hours in Adult Education*	*Hours per month services are in home-based setting*
Adult Education				
Beginning ABE *(0-5.9: CASAS 0-200)*	11 (4)	9.25 (4)	101 (4)	1 (2)
Intermediate ABE *(6.0-8.9: CASAS 201-235)*	11.6 (5)	9.4 (5)	109 (5)	1.3 (3)
Adult Secondary Education/GED preparation *(9-12: CASAS over 235)*	15.6 (6)	9.6 (6)	150 (6)	1.5 (2)
English as a second language (ESL)	15.6 (7)	9.6 (7)	150 (7)	2.0 (5)
Parenting Education				
Parent alone	3.4 (7)	7.3 (7)	25 (7)	1.8 (6)
Parent and child are involved together	4.3 (6)	9.6 (6)	41 (7)	2.4 (6)
Early Childhood Education				
Under age 3	6.2 (6)	9.6 (6)	60 (6)	3.2 (6)
Age 3 and 4	7.6 (6)	9.6 (6)	73 (6)	3.2 (6)
Age 5	7.7 (7)	9.7 (7)	75 (7)	3.2 (7)
Age 6 and 7	6.6 (5)	9.6 (6)	63 (6)	3.2 (6)

Parenting Education. On average, seven projects offered a total of 25 hours *of Parenting education alone*—3.4 hours per month for 7.3 months per year. In addition, six

projects offered an average of 41 hours per year of *Parent and child time together*—4.2 hours per month for 9.6 months per year. In other words, most adults could receive a total of 66 hours of parenting education—7.6 hours per month for 8.5 months per year.

The hours of scheduled parenting education in Nevada Even Start projects, like the hours of scheduled adult education, are less than the scheduled hours reported for federal Even Start projects in the *National Evaluation of the Even Start Family Literacy Program* (January 1997). Federal Even Start projects reported a total of 99 hours of *Parent alone* and 96 hours of *Parent and child time together*—an average of 10 hours per month for 10 months for both parent alone and parent and child together. One possible explanation of the difference between the scheduled hours in parenting education of Nevada and federal Even Start programs is that most Nevada programs use the Bowdoin Parenting Program. This program, which uses videos as one way to instruct parents, allows parents to watch the videos on their own time at home. Parents may watch the videos one, two, or even three times—which would substantially increase the number of hours that parents spent in parent education. These "at-home" parent education hours are not included in the scheduled hours for parenting education.

Early Childhood Education. The scheduled hours of early childhood education differed depending upon the age group of children. On average, projects scheduled a total of 60 hours per year of educational services to infants and toddlers up to three years of age— 6.2 hours per month for 9.6 months. For three to four year olds, projects scheduled an average of 73 hours: 7.6 hours per month for 9.6 months. Five years olds were served the most frequently: a total of 75 hours—7.7 hours per month for 9.7 months. Six to seven year-olds were offered a total of 63 hours: 6.6 hours per month for 9.6 months.

As in the case of adult and parent education, Nevada Even Start projects offered children fewer hours of educational services than federal Even Start projects. Federal projects offered 350 hours of educational services for children from birth to three years-old, 489 hours to 3 to 4 year-olds, 519 hours to 5 year-olds, and 557 hours to 6 and 7 year-olds. One possible explanation for the difference between the Nevada and federal Even Start programs is that the federal programs probably include many center-based programs

where children spend half to most of the day. The Nevada Even Start program, on the other hand, does not include a daytime, center-based program.

Parenting and Adult Education.

To determine the extent to which adult education was integrated with parenting education, projects directors were asked to identify the number of hours per month that adult education is combined with parent education.

Table 21. Hours of integrated adult education and parenting education

Settings	*Number of Projects*	*Average hours per month*
Beginning ABE *(0-5.9: CASAS 0-200)*	2	3
Intermediate ABE *(6.0-8.9: CASAS 201-235)*	1	2
Adult Secondary Education/ GED preparation *(9-12: CASAS over 235)*	1	2
English as a second language (ESL)	5	3.1

Table 21 shows that most projects did not combine adult education with parent education: two projects combined adult education and parent education in *Beginning ABE* for three hours per month. One project combined adult education with parenting education in *Intermediate ABE* and *Adult Secondary Education* for two hours per month. The only exception was adults in *English as a Second Language*: five projects combined adult education with parent education for about three hours per month.

Chapter VI. Participation in Services

Chapter IV showed that many Even Start families have multiple disadvantages that include limited educational experiences, poverty, low paying employment, and limited English proficiency. Chapter V showed that Even Start projects implemented various strategies to address the diverse educational needs of these families. However, given the difficulties families face, encouraging and maintaining participant motivation is one of the most significant challenges for projects. This chapter will present participation outcomes for Even Start families. The extent of participation was assessed by several measures.

For families, we examined—

- The length of time families participated in the program;
- The number of home visits conducted with each family during the year;
- The percentage of families still participating in the program; and
- The reasons for exiting the program during the year.

For adults, we examined—

- The number of adults participating in different adult education services;
- The number of hours adults participated in adult education program; and
- The number of hours adults participated in parenting education.

For children, we examined—

- The number of children participating in different early childhood services; and
- The number of hours children participated in early childhood education.

The results are presented in three sections: family participation, adult participation, and child participation.

Family Participation

Length of Time in Program.

Research has found that the length of time families participate in Even Start is positively correlated with the gains of adults in adult education and parenting skills and children in school readiness (*National Evaluation of the Even Start Family Literacy Program*, 1995). Clearly, a primary purpose of the program is to retain families in the program long enough so families can reach their goals, such as obtaining a high school diploma, learning to speak English, or better preparing their children for school. Many families stay in the program for one, two, and even three years as they work on family goals.

Table 22 shows the number and percent of families enrolled in Even Start projects by months in the program. Data are available on 265 of the 328 families in the program.

Table 22. Length of participation by months

Months in Program	Number	Percent
One	36	14
Two	20	8
Three	12	5
Four	20	8
Five	21	8
Six	34	13
Seven	29	11
Eight	12	5
Nine	20	8
Ten	32	12
Eleven	7	3
Twelve	13	5
Thirteen	7	3
TOTAL	265	100

Families could be enrolled in Nevada Even Start from 1 to 15 months—which represents the amount of time that the programs operated from their beginning through March 1999.[11]

On average, Even Start families were in the program for 6.2 months. The number of months families participated in Even Start is influenced by the fact the evaluation covers portions of two program years, 1997-98 and 1998-99. Some Even Start families often leave the program during the summer which partly explains why many participants were in the program fewer than six months even though most programs operated for at least 12 months. In addition, projects enrolled 36 new families in February 1999 right before the end of the evaluation period, thereby reducing the average number of months families had been in the program.

Number of Home Visits

A home visit is one of the critical (and required) activities in the design and delivery of the Nevada Even Start program. Home visits allow Even Start staff the opportunity to build a one-to-one relationship with the family to promote adult and child growth and development. During home visits, Even Start staff typically work with children and parents together on early childhood education and parenting skills.

Although Nevada Even Start projects are expected to conduct home visits, projects are not required to conduct a specific number of home visits per family. Instead, projects are given the flexibility to determine the frequency of home visits based on program design, family need, staff resources,[12] as well as the families' receptiveness to home visits.

Overall, Even Start families participated in an average of 9 home visits. The number of home visits for Even Start families varies greatly based on how long the family was in the program, project design, and family need. Some families received only one or two home visits while other families received as many as 20 home visits.

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[11] Most projects operated for 13 months: only one project operated for 15 months.

[12] Home visits place substantial demands on staff resources.

Family Retention.

Of the 328 families who enrolled in Even Start from January 1998 to March 1999, 239 families (73 percent) were still in the program in March 1999. The Nevada Even Start retention rate is higher than the retention of families reported in the evaluation of the national Even Start program. That is, 64 percent of Even Start families who enrolled during the program year were still in the program at the end of the year (*National Evaluation of the Even Start Family Literacy Program*, 1995). The Nevada Even Start results, in fact, should be interpreted as substantially more positive than the national results since Nevada Even Start data reflect retention over two programs years whereas the national data reflect retention within one program year which is usually higher than between years.

Reason for Exiting Program.

Eighty-nine families (27 percent) left the program over the evaluation period from January 1998 to March 1999. Project staff reported a range of reasons why families left the program. Table 23 shows the number and percent of families that exited the program for various reasons.

Table 23. Reasons for exiting program

Reasons	Number	Percent
Family members met goals or completed the eligible planned education	-	-
Parent or child switched to a different program	2	2
Family moved out of the area served by the Even Start program	29	33
Family stopped participating due to a lack of interest	7	8
Family was dropped due to incomplete participation or poor attendance	8	9
Parent(s) found employment that prevents further participation	13	15
Family crisis prevents further participation	4	4
Conflicts or problems prevents continued participation	10	11
Other reason	14	16
Reason unknown	1	1

The most common reason for termination was a family moving out of the project area (29 families or 33 percent). Fourteen families (16 percent) cited "other reasons" for leaving the program. Other common reasons for exiting the program included adults found employment that prevented them from further participation (13 families or 15 percent), and conflicts and problems prevented families from participation (10 families or 11 percent).

Adult Participation

The evaluation collected data on two of the required criteria for a family to qualify for Even Start services—adult participation in adult education and parenting education. The two components are intended not only to improve adult literacy skills, but also to better equip parents to support their children's social, emotional, and academic development. The evaluation collected information on the types of adult education parents participated in as well as the hours of participation in adult education and parenting education.

Type of Adult Services.

Project staff reported the type of education program in which each adult participated. Table 24 shows the number and percent of adults that participated in each adult education program. The most prevalent was English as a Second Language (ESL) in which 223 Even Start adults (61 percent) enrolled. The next most common type of adult education was GED preparation in which 24 percent of adults participated. (The percentages in Table 24 total more than 100 percent because projects could report more than one type of program for each adult.)

Table 24. Number of adults participating in Adult Education Programs.

Type of Adult Education Program	Number	Percent
Beginning adult basic education *(grades 0-5.9)*	63	17
Intermediate adult basic education *(grades 6-8.9)*	10	3
Adult secondary education *(grades 9-12)*	32	9
GED preparation	87	24
ESL	223	61
Other (specify) _____	71	19

Hours of Participation in Adult Education

The amount of time that Even Start parents participate in adult education classes is a strong positive predictor of gains in adult literacy. Overall, Even Start adults participated in adult education an average of 12.4 hours per month for 4.5 months—a total of 55.4 hours during the program. The data, however, represent a wide range of total hours (from 2 to 80 hours per month) and a wide range of length in participation—from 1 to 12 months.

The number of hours that Even Start parents participate in adult education is influenced, in part, by the type of adult education program since the programs offer different total hours of services. Table 25 shows the number of adults that participated in each type of adult education, the average number of months in adult education, the average number of hours per month in each type of adult education, and the average total hours in each type of adult education.

Table 25. Hours of adult education

Type of Adult Education Program	*Number of Adults*	*Average Number of Months*	*Average Hours Per Month*	*Total Hours*
Beginning adult basic education *(grades 0-5.9)*	63	3.1	10.3	32.4
Intermediate adult basic education *(grades 6-8.9)*	10	1.3	5.6	7.3
Adult secondary education *(grades 9-12)*	32	4.0	19.1	76.9
GED preparation	87	3.3	9.0	29.7
ESL	223	5.1	11.7	59.8
Other (specify) _____	71	5.7	18.5	106.1
TOTAL	486	4.5	12.4	55.4

The results show, on average, Even Start adults enrolled in "Other" adult education programs spent more time in adult education than adults enrolled in other types of adult education. ("Other" typically included tutoring or computer instruction.) Adults enrolled in intermediate adult education spent the least amount of time in adult education. In Chapter

5, we reported that projects offered an average of 11 to 15 hours per month of adult education, depending upon the type of adult education. Based on participation levels as shown in Table 25 above, Even Start adults attended most of the adult services offered.

Hours of Parenting Education.

Like adult education, parenting education is one of the three required components of Even Start. Parents must participate in Even Start in order to maintain program eligibility. Unlike the National Evaluation of Even Start, which reported that 12 percent of adults did not participate in parenting education, all Nevada Even Start adults participated in parenting education.

Overall, Even Start adults participated in parenting education an average of 4.9 hours per month for 4.7 months—a total of 22.9 hours during the program. These data also represent a wide range of total hours (from 1 to 80 hours per month) and a wide range of length in participation—from 1 to 12 months. Most adults, however, participated in 1 to 4 hours of parenting education per month. Table 26 shows the number of adults who participated in parenting education in four ranges: 1 to 2 hours, 3 to 4 hours, 5 hours to 6 hours, and over 6 hours of parenting education.

Table 26. Range of hours that adults participated in parenting education

Range of Hours	Number of Adults	Percent of Adults
1-2	171	50
3-4	110	32
5-6	22	6
Over 6	45	12

Child Participation

The third required component of Nevada Even Start is early childhood education. A primary purpose of early childhood education is to better prepare children for school.

Type of Child Services.

Project staff reported the type of education program in which each child participated. Table 27 shows the number and percent of children that participated in types of early childhood programs. The most prevalent was individualized, home based ECE in which 266 Even Start children (42 percent) enrolled. The next most common type of early childhood education was organized, center based ECE in which 224 children or 39 percent of children participated. (The percentages in Table 27 total more than 100 percent because projects could report more than one type of program for each child.)

Table 27. Number of children participating in early childhood programs.

Type of Early Childhood Education	Number	Percent
Organized, center-based ECE	244	48
Individualized, home-based ECE	266	52
Day care with educational component	22	4
Educational services for school-age children outside school hours	14	3
Compulsory schooling (K-3) coordinating with Even Start	56	11
None	10	2
Other	21	4

Hours of Participation in Early Childhood Education

The amount of time that Even Start children participated in an early childhood education program is a strong positive predictor of performance on early childhood measures. Overall, Even Start children participated in early childhood education an average of 18.1 hours per month for 6.2 months—a total of 113 hours. However, children showed a wide range of participation in early childhood education (from 2 to 160 hours per month) and a wide range of length in participation—from 1 to 12 months.

The number of hours that Even Start children participated in early childhood education was influenced, in part, by the early childhood education program since the programs offer different total hours of services. Table 28 shows the number that participated in each type of early childhood education, the average number of months in the program, the av-

erage number of hours children attended the type of early childhood education, and the total number of hours in early childhood education.

Table 28. Number of children participating in early childhood programs.

Type of Early Childhood Education	Number of Children	Average Months in Program	Average Hours Per Month	Total Hours
Organized, center-based ECE	244	4.7	14.9	69.4
Individualized, home-based ECE	266	7.0	14.1	98.3
Day care with educational component	22	7.9	60.5	478.1
Educational services for school-age children outside school hours	14	7.3	19.7	143.6
Compulsory schooling (K-3) coordinating with Even Start	56	10.3	30.5	313.6
None	10	1.6	3.2	5.1
Other	21	4.5	33.1	148.7
TOTAL	633	6.2	18.1	112.6

The results show, on average, Even Start children spent more time in a day care setting with an educational component than the other types of early childhood education settings. On average, children spent the least amount of time in organized, center-based ECE. It is interesting to note that the amount of time that projects reported children were in early childhood education settings exceeded the amount of time that projects reported they offered as presented in Chapter 5. One explanation is that this table includes the amount of time children spent in all ECE settings, including those offered by Even Start.

Chapter VII. Participant Outcomes

This chapter presents the educational and developmental outcomes of the seven Nevada Even Start projects by the three service areas. The participant outcomes are based primarily on assessments administered in each core service area. The selection of the assessment instruments is, in part, a result of the decisions made by the Nevada's federal Even Start projects. That is, federal regulations require every federal Even Start project to conduct an independent evaluation of the program to "determine performance and effectiveness" and "to identify effective Even Start programs." In order to assist local Even Start projects in developing an independent evaluation, the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) held several meetings during 1995-96 to discuss possible assessment instruments. During the meetings, NDE encouraged projects to select common assessment instruments to measure program effects. By selecting common assessment instruments, NDE could combine the results across projects to obtain a statewide picture of the effects of Even Start.

The federal Even Start project directors made several decisions about assessing participant outcomes at these meetings. First, they decided to use the same assessment instruments to measure the impact of their programs in early childhood education. That is, the directors agreed to administer the Preschool Language Scale-3 (PLS-3) to children ages birth to 2.5, the PreSchool Inventory (PSI) to children ages 2.5 to 5, and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) to children ages 5 and over. Second, the directors agreed to use the assessment instrument administered by the adult education provider to measure adult literacy. The directors made this decision to avoid double testing adults since they are typically already assessed as part of their adult education program. For example, Carson City Even Start used the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), the assessment instrument used by their adult education provider (i.e., Western Nevada Community College) to measure adult literacy. Third, to measure parenting education, the project directors agreed to select the assessment instrument that provided the best match to their parenting education curricula. For example, projects that used the *Bowdoin Parenting Program* for parenting education would use the survey assessment

instrument that accompanies the program (i.e., *Bowdoin Inventory of Parent Beliefs and Practices*). Finally, the projects agreed to include in data analyses only participants in the program at least four months. This criterion is based on the belief that program participants must have an adequate opportunity to benefit from program experiences before the impact of the program can be accurately assessed.

When the Nevada State Legislature established the Nevada Even Start Program, NDE decided to require the Nevada Even Start projects to follow the assessment decisions made by Nevada's federal Even Start program. A major benefit of using the same assessments is the ability to combine data from both federal and state-funded Even Start projects in the future.

Table 29 identifies the assessment instruments for each service area presented in this report. In addition to the two parenting skills assessments, the evaluation collected data on two other indicators of parenting skills: the amount of time that parents spent with their children and the amount of time that parents read to or with their children.

Table 29. Instruments used to assess Even Start participant outcomes

Service Area	Instrument
Early Childhood Education	• Preschool Language Scale-3 (PLS-3) for ages birth to 2.5 • PreSchool Inventory (PSI) for ages 2.5 to 5 • Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) for ages 5 and over
Adult Education	• Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS)
Parenting Skills	• Bowdoin Inventory of Parent Beliefs and Practices, or • Avance Parenting Questionnaire • Hours per day parents spend with their children • Hours per week that parents read to or with their children

The assessment instruments for each program goal were administered at entry to the program. Normally, the assessments are administered again at the end of the program year or when a family exits the program. For the purpose of the Final Evaluation Report, the as-

sessments were administered again in March 1999, or when a family exited the program.

Early Childhood Education

Overall, the results show that Even Start programs made small to large gains in early childhood education—depending upon the children's age level. Children from birth through two and a half years old made large gains in auditory comprehension and expressive communication, and children from two and a half to five years old made large gains in school readiness. Children over five years of age made small gains in receptive vocabulary. The results for each assessment are discussed separately below.

Preschool Language Scale The PLS-3 is an individually administered, norm-referenced language assessment for children from birth to six years old, assessing auditory comprehension and expressive communication. The scores in auditory comprehension and expressive communication can be summed and converted to a total language score. The test is currently being used in the national evaluation of Even Start. In Nevada, the PLS-3 was used to assess children ages birth to two and a half years-old. Even Start or district staff administered the PLS-3 to the children. The PLS-3 can be administered in English or Spanish.

The PLS-3 data are expressed in standard score units. Standard scores express, in standard deviation units, the extent to which a child's score exceeds, or falls below, the mean score of children the same age upon which the test was standardized. PLS-3 scores have a standard score mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15. So for example, one-year-old children in the PLS-3 norms group have an average raw score of 11 in expressive communication which equates to a standard score of 100; two-year-olds have a average raw score of 20, which is also assigned a standard score of 100; three-year-olds have an average raw score of 29 which equates to a standard score of 100; and so on.

This analysis is done with standard scores, and because of the way they are constructed, our expectation is that the PLS-3 standard scores should not change in the absence of a "treatment." There is no "maturation effect" for the PLS-3 because the standard scores are age-linked. That is, a one-year-old who scores at the mean for all one-year-olds will have

the same standard score as a three-year old who scores at the mean for all three-year-olds. Hence, there is no particular reason a child's percentile ranking in relation to the PLS-3 norms group should change over time unless that child is receiving special services. An increase in standard score during the time that a child is participating in Even Start is, therefore, taken as an indication that Even Start is helping increase children's auditory comprehension and expressive communication.

Pre- and posttest scores are available for 38 children. Table 30 shows that the 38 children made a mean gain of 13.2 standard score points in auditory comprehension and 14.3 standard score points in expressive communication on the PLS-3.

Table 30. Preschool Language Scale-3 mean scores, n = 38

PLS-3 Subtests	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Mean Gain
Auditory Comprehension	86.7	99.9	13.2
Expressive Communication	85.9	100.2	14.3

In comparison, data from the *National Evaluation of the Even Star Family Literacy Program (1997)* show that Even Start children made a mean gain of 5.2 standard score points.[13] In other words, Nevada Even Start children scored substantially higher than children in the National Evaluation of Even Start.

PreSchool Inventory The PSI is an individually administered measure that assesses a range of school readiness skills, such as shapes and colors and understanding numerical concepts. Program staff administered the PreSchool Inventory to children ages two and a half to five years-old. The PSI was developed to be sensitive to instruction and has shown positive effects of preschool programs in previous research. The PSI can be administered in English or Spanish. Although the test does not have national norms, it is currently being used in the National Evaluation of the federal Even Start Family Literacy Program. Nevada gains on the PSI, thus, can be compared to the gains of children in the national

[13] The PLS-3 was used with children from two to six and a half years-old in the National Evaluation.

evaluation of the federal Even Start program. The PSI scores are reported as raw scores.

Pre- and posttest test scores are available for 101 children. Table 31 shows that the 101 children made a mean gain of 7.9 points on the PSI.

Table 31. PSI mean scores, n = 101

Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Mean Gain
14.1	22.0	7.9

Without national norms, it is difficult to judge the significance of a gain of 7.9 raw score points. The national evaluation of Even Start (reported in *National Evaluation of the Even Start Family Literacy Program*, 1995) provides some information to interpret the gain on the PSI. The national study developed age norms for the PSI based on data collected on Even Start children. In effect, the study generated a growth curve that represents a no-treatment effect for the Even Start population. Children are expected to gain .4 items per month on the PSI, solely on the basis of normal development. Any gain over .4 items per month can be attributed to the Even Start program.

The 101 children included in the PSI results were in the program (between the pre- and posttests) an average of 7.1 months. This means, based on the explanation above, these children would be expected to make a mean gain of 2.8 raw score points on the PSI. Nevada Even Start children made a mean gain of 7.9 raw score points, or an average monthly gain of 1.1 items per month,[14] above the no-treatment effect for Even Start children. The gain of 1.1 items per month can be expressed as the combination of .40 items per month due to normal development plus .70 items per month due to Even Start. Therefore, participation in Even Start helped students almost triple the expected rate of learning on the PSI.

I also calculated an "effect size" which researchers sometimes use to make an estimate of

[14] In the National Evaluation of Even Start, children made a gain of .91 items per month, for a mean gain of 5.8 raw score points.

the "value" of the gain.[15] In this case, the effect size was large—a standard deviation of 1.1 as compared to the effect of other social programs. This means that if Even Start children were "typical" children at the time of the pretest, half of the population they were drawn from would have scored above the Even Start pretest score and half would have scored below. However, by the posttest, only about 15 percent of the same population they were chosen from would have scored above the Even Start children. Thus, the Nevada Even Start program had a very positive effect in improving the school readiness skills of children in the program.

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. The PPVT is an individually administered test that measures receptive (hearing) vocabulary, and gives a quick estimate of verbal or literacy-related skills. The PPVT is appropriate for children between the ages of two and 18 years old. In this evaluation, program staff administered the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test to children over five years-old. Staff administered the Spanish version (the Test de Vocabulario en Imagenes Peabody, or TVIP16) to children if, in the judgment of program staff, this was a more appropriate test.

The PPVT data are expressed in standard score units. PPVT scores have a standard score mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 25. Like the PLS-3, our expectation is that the PPVT standard scores should not change in the absence of a "treatment." There is no "maturation effect" for the PPVT. An increase in standard score during the time a child is participating in Even Start is, therefore, taken as an indication that Even Start is helping increase children's receptive vocabulary.

Pre- and posttest scores are available for 64 children on the PPVT. Table 32 shows that the 64 children made a mean gain of 6.1 standard score points on the PPVT. Thus, the

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[15] Effect size is a type of standard score. It is found by dividing the difference between experimental and control group means divided by the standard deviation of the control group. In this instance, it is found by dividing the difference between the pretest and posttest means by the standard deviation of the pretest. It would then represent, in standard score terms, the superiority of the average person in the treated group over the untreated group. To help interpret the meaning of effect sizes: 1.0 is considered large, .5 considered medium, and .2 considered small.

[16] The results from the TVIP are not presented because they are based on a small sample size, n=12. Results based on small sample sizes are unreliable and must be interpreted with caution.

Even Start programs had a positive effect on improving receptive vocabulary of children in the program.

Table 32. PPVT mean scores

Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Mean Gain
85.2	91.3	6.1

In order to assess the value of the gains, we compared the gains on the PPVT to the gains of children reported in the national evaluation of Even Start. The gain of Even Start children reported in a national evaluation was 7.1 on the PPVT. In other words, Nevada Even Start children made gains in receptive vocabulary but did not perform quite as well as children in the national Even Start sample. A possible explanation of these results is that the Nevada Even Start projects may not have focused on receptive vocabulary as much as other areas of child development.

Adult Education

Overall, the results show that the Even Start adults made slightly larger than expected gains in reading and listening as measured by the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System—the adult assessment used to measure participant outcomes in adult literacy.

Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) The Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System is an adult-oriented functional assessment system that measures a broad range of adult literacy skills and their application in real life domains including consumer economics, government and law, occupational knowledge, and community resources and health. Although the CASAS includes subtests in reading, writing, listening, mathematics, and problem solving skills, Even Start projects administered the reading subtest and/or the listening subtest depending on an adult's English proficiency. In general, projects administered the Reading subtest to adults with adequate English skills and projects administered the Listening subtest to adults with limited English proficiency. Some limited English-proficient adults were also administered the

Reading subtest.

The CASAS has the flexibility to measure participants involved in diverse adult education programs, spanning the range from non-readers to adults at the GED or high school level. The CASAS was used in the National Evaluation of Even Start as well as the National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs. CASAS reading scores range from 150 to 260.

Table 33 shows the pretest and posttest means for 161 adults on the Reading subtest and 25 adults on the Listening subtest who received services for at least four months. The pretest results indicate that Even Start adults are operating at a basic literacy level. That is, the average pretest scale score on the CASAS Reading test was 207.8. This score corresponds to a basic literacy level. Adults at this level can function in entry-level jobs that require only minimal literacy skills. For example, they can complete simple application forms. The average pretest scale score on the CASAS Listening test was 208.3. The score corresponds to beginning basic skills. Limited English adults at this level can fill out simple forms requiring basic personal information, write a simple list or telephone message, calculate a single simple operation when numbers are given, and make simple change. These adults can handle entry-level jobs that involve simple written communication.

Table 33. Reading and Listening CASAS pretest means

Subtest (n)	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Mean Gain
Reading (161)	207.8	214.5	6.7
Listening (25)	208.3	214.2	5.9

The results also show that Even Start adults made an average gain of 6.7 points on the Reading Subtest of the CASAS and 5.9 standard score points on the Listening subtest of the CASAS. The Reading gains are larger than the gains found in other federal and state adult literacy programs. For example, adults in the national evaluation of Even Start made a mean scale score gain of 4.9 in reading *(National Evaluation of the Even Start Family*

Literacy Program, 1997). A study of state-funded competency education program in California reported gains of 4.2 scale score points (CBAE, 1987). No comparable national data exist on the Listening portion of the CASAS since it was not used in the national evaluation of Even Start. Thus, Even Start programs had a positive effect in improving the reading and listening skills of Even Start adults.

Parenting Education

Projects selected the instrument to assess impact in parent education based on their parenting curriculum. The seven Even Start projects selected one of three assessment instruments to measure parenting skills based on the parenting program the project used—either *Teaching Involved Parenting, AVANCE*, or *Bowdoin Parenting Programs*. Projects that used the *Bowdoin Parenting Program* administered the *Bowdoin Inventory of Parenting Beliefs and Practices,*[17] projects that used *AVANCE Parenting Program* administered the *AVANCE Parenting Questionnaire*[18] and so on. In all, five projects used the *Bowdoin Parenting Program,* one project used the *AVANCE Program,* and one project used the *Teaching Involved Parenting Questionnaire.*

Projects reported pretest and posttest data on all three assessments. In addition to the parenting assessments, all projects collected data on the amount of time that parents spent with their children daily and the amount of time that parents read to or with their child.

Parenting Questionnaires. The scores for the three assessment instruments are reported as raw scores. No norms exist for the instrument. Pre- and posttest scores were available on 181 adults who had been in the program for at least four months. Table 34 shows the pretest mean, posttest mean, mean gain, and effect size for each of the three parenting assessment instruments.

Overall, adults made positive raw score gains on each parenting assessment instrument. An effect size was calculated to estimate the value of the gain on each assessment instru-

[17] The *Bowdoin Inventory of Parents Beliefs and Practices* is a survey instrument that asks parents to respond either YES or NO to 50 statements about parenting beliefs.
[18] The *AVANCE Parenting Questionnaire* is a survey instrument that asks parents to respond to 22 multiple choice questions about parenting.

ment. In this case, the effect sizes ranged from medium to large depending on the assessment instrument. Adults made large gains on the *AVANCE Parenting Questionnaire* and *Bowdoin Inventory of Parents Beliefs and Practices* and medium gains on the *Teaching Involved Parenting Questionnaire*. Thus, overall, the Even Start program had positive effects on the parenting skills of Even Start adults.

Table 34. Parenting Assessment Mean Scores and Effect Size

Assessment Instrument (N)	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Mean Gain	Effect Size
AVANCE Parenting Questionnaire (20)	15	19.4	4.4	.83
Bowdoin Inventory of Parents Beliefs and Practices (126)	32.3	40.2	7.9	1.0
Teaching Involved Parenting (35)	20.3	22.6	2.3	.62

Parent and Child Time (PACT) Together. The amount of time parents spend with their children is an important goal in parenting education. PACT time allows parents to become increasingly involved in their children's education and to increase the adults' parenting skills. Even Start staff asked parents to estimate the number of hours they spent with their child each day when they enrolled in the program and again at the end of the evaluation period.

Table 35 shows the number of hours that parents reported spending with their child each day prior to enrolling in Even Start and at the end of the evaluation period in March 1999. Pretest and posttest data were available on 244 children who were in Even Start at least four months. The results indicate that many parents already spent considerable time with their children. One possible explanation is that the large number of Even Start parents who are full-time home makers already spend considerable time with their preschool children.

Table 35. Hours of parent and child time (PACT) together, n = 244

PACT Hours Together	Pretest number and percents	Posttest numbers and percents
More than two hours	60 (25%)	87 (36%)
1-2 hours	55 (23%)	70 (29%)
About 1 hour	54 (22%)	47 (19%)
30 minutes to 1 hour	39 (16%)	29 (12%)
Less than 30 minutes	29 (12%)	10 (4%)
None	7 (3%)	1 (less than 1%)

Nevertheless, the results also show that a greater percentage of parents spent more time with their children after participating in Even Start than at intake. For example, 115 parents (47 percent) spent more than 1 hour with their children prior to Even Start and 157 parents (64 percent) spent more than one hour after participating in Even Start. In other words, Even Start appears to have positively impacted the amount of time that parents spent with their children.

Parent and Child Reading Time. An even more specific goal of Even Start is to increase the amount of time adults spend reading to or with their children. Reading together has many benefits. It provides parents with a direct opportunity to become more involved in their child's education, increases the child's school readiness skills, and even improves adult literacy skills. Even Start staff asked parents to estimate the number of hours that they spend weekly reading with or to their children when they enrolled in the program and again at the end of the evaluation period.

Pretest and posttest data were available on 244 children who were in Even Start at least four months. Table 36 shows that Even Start parents spent an average of 1.3 more hours (approximately 80 minutes) per week reading to or with their child at the end of the evaluation period than when the family enrolled in Even Start.

Table 36. Parent and Child Reading Time Together, n=244

Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Mean Gain
3.2	4.5	1.3

Thus, Even Start achieved one of its more important goals—to increase the amount of time that parents spend reading with or to their children

Chapter VIII. Testimonials

The impact of social and educational programs is sometimes difficult to measure because of imprecise assessment instruments. This is especially true for early childhood assessments and assessments of limited English proficient adults and children, such as in Even Start. In order to provide a more complete picture of the impact of Even Start on families, especially for the Interim Evaluation Report, we asked projects to collect and submit testimonials from their Even Start families. While anecdotal, testimonials can be a powerful medium to convey the impact of a program on the lives of participants that is sometimes missed by standardized assessment instruments.

We asked the projects to submit testimonials from two families who would be willing to write about their experiences in the project and what it has meant to them. We asked that, if possible, the participating adult to write the testimonial. Project staff should help only if necessary. This section of the report includes one testimonial from each project.

Martha—Carson City School District Even Start Program.

Martha is a 33 year-old Hispanic married woman with one child, Arnold. Martha was born in Mexico where she obtained a college degree. She is currently working full–time as a cook. The family makes an annual income of $10,000 to $20,000.

Martha enrolled in Even Start in February 1998 because she wanted her son to receive extra help in school. She also wanted to improve her chances of future success and to learn English. She is currently learning English in the Even Start computer lab and plans to enroll in classes at Western Nevada Community College. Arnold attends kindergarten and receives additional assistance in school from the Even Start teacher and through the home-visits from Even Start family advocates.

***Letter**. My name is Martha.*

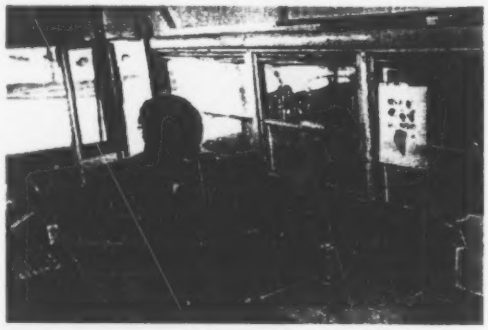
I am a student of the Even Start program. I am very happy with this program because I learn something new each day. The English class helps me very much to achieve the goal of learning to speak, to write, and to read in English as well as learning other things. The computer lab is helping me with pronunciation.

I really like the program. It is beneficial to my family, especially for my son. He has learned very much from his Even Start family advocate. I am very happy with what he is teaching my son.

Martha

Jewel—Computers on Wheels (COW) Even Start Program.

Jewel is a 24 year old African-American single mother with two children, Jessica and Precious. Jewel has a high school diploma and is currently unemployed. She has an annual income of less than $10,000.



Jewel enrolled in the COW Even Start Program in September 1998 to improve her employment opportunities and to obtain services for her children so they are better prepared for school. As part of Even Start, Jewel enrolled in the local community college and started classes. In addition, her children attend the COW bus when she is there for adult education. The Even Start family advocates also instruct Jessica and Precious during home visits.

> ***Letter***. *My name is Jewel. I am a participant of the Computer on Wheels Even Start Program. I have two children that participate on the COW bus. I think that this is an excellent program, especially if you are looking for a job that involves using computes. It has helped me increase my typing speed skills. I am planning to take another computer class which I failed the typing test on before. I am very confident that I will pass this time. This program has really motivated me to get up and do the things that I have dreamed about and actually make them a reality. It really has had a positive effect on my future and me.*
>
> *The teachers are very helpful, patient, kind and friendly. I would like to thank them for their time and help, thank you. I would recommend this program to anyone who would like to make a positive start in his or her life and career. I know it had made me look at my future in a different perspective. Once again THANK YOU Computer on Wheels Even Start Program.*
>
> *Sincerely Yours,*
>
> *Jewel*

Angel—Pershing County School District Even Start Program.

Angel is a 27 year-old Caucasian married woman with two children: ShoShanna is four years old and ShyAnn is one year old. Angel has some college experience but recently lost her job and is currently unemployed. The family makes $30,000 to $39,000 a year when Angel works.

Angel enrolled in Even Start in February1998 to improve her employment opportunities and to place her children in a preschool program (i.e., Even Start) to prepare them for school. As part of Even Start, Angel enrolled in the local community college to complete the classes required to enter a Nursing Program. Angel's two children receive help from the home advocates during home visits. Angel also regularly attends the parenting education classes that Even Start conducts.

> ***Letter***. *My name is Angel and I would like to take some time to tell you that this program has been assisting me. I had recently lost my job and I felt that I needed to go back to school to further my education and increase my job skills. I started the program in February 1998. Through this program, I received partial mileage and child care reimbursement. This helped ease the financial burden of traveling and the high cost of education.*
>
> *They also had various classes on goal setting, family and child interaction. My children also enjoyed RIF (Reading is Fundamental) and looked forward to the home visits. Everyone in my family has benefited from this program and I feel it should continue so as to assist others.*
>
> *Sincerely,*
>
> *Angel*

Inez—Jobs Opportunities in Nevada (JOIN) Even Start Program.

Inez is a 32 year-old Hispanic married woman with two children: Riccardo is five years old and Bryan is three years old. Inez and her husband came from Mexico a few years ago where Inez completed a 9th grade education. Inez is currently working full-time at one of the local hotels as a housekeeper. The family makes about $10,000 to $20,000 a year.

Inez enrolled in Even Start in August 1998 to become a better parent and teacher for her children, and to learn English. The family has already made good progress. As part of Even Start, Inez attends Washoe High English as a Second Language classes four nights a week from 6:00 p.m. to 7:45 p.m. after work. In addition, an Even Start home advocate visits the family two times a month to work with Riccardo and Bryan in early childhood education and parenting education for Inez.

> ***Letter.*** *For the Even Start Program,*
>
> *I am writing this letter to let you know that I appreciate your help. I am thankful to be in this program. This program has helped me to learn English, and because of this, I can take my children to the Doctor's appointment and to any other appointments without an interpreter.*
>
> *We have learned how to recognize words, and when the family advocates visits us, I can ask questions and understand the answers. I have also learned to be a better mother and a better teacher for my children.*
>
> *Thank you to the Even Start program for having us as a family within the program. It has been very helpful.*
>
> *Thank You,*
>
> *Inez*

Lourdes—Moapa Band of Paiutes Even Start Program.

Lourdes is a 38 year-old Hispanic married woman with two children: Javier and Luis are both six years old. Lourdes attended college in Mexico where she was born but did not earn a degree. Lourdes is a full-time homemaker staying home to take care of the children over the last few years. The family earns an annual income of $30,000 to $39,000.

Lourdes enrolled in Even Start in May 1998 to help her children succeed in school, to be able to better teach her children, and to learn English. As part of Even Start, Lourdes and her two sons go to Perkins Elementary School several times a week. Lourdes attends both ESL and parenting education classes, and Javier and Luis are involved in the early childhood program. In addition, Even Start conducts a parent and child activity each evening so that Lourdes has the opportunity to interact with Javier and Luis in a structured activity.

> ***Letter.*** *To Whom It Concerns,*
>
> *Project LEAF has personally helped me learn how to speak and write the English language by attending ESL classes. I am very happy and thankful to all the personnel who collaborated on this project because with this help we can make goals and actually reach them. I would like to have the opportunity to learn how to fill out doctor forms and job applications, etc., because these forms are part of our daily lives.*
>
> *Again, I would like to thank all of the people that make this project possible and hope we will keep progressing. Together, we can do anything!*
>
> *Sincerely*
>
> *Lourdes*

Genoveva—Nye County School District Even Start Program.

Genoveva is a 29 year-old Hispanic married woman. Genoveva received a high school diploma in Mexico where she and her husband were born. They have two children: Chris is five years old and Aaron is two years old. Genoveva is currently unemployed. When employed, she works as a housekeeper.

Genoveva enrolled in Even Start in October 1998 to be a better teacher and parent to her children, and to further her education to obtain a GED certificate. Genoveva attends GED classes weekly, works individually with the GED teacher, and attends ESL classes. She also acts an interpreter for new Hispanic families who enroll in the program. Even Start family advocates make two home-visits with the family monthly. In addition, an Even Start family advocate also provides extra help to Chris, Genoveva's son, in his classroom.

> ***Letter.*** *In October 1998, I got involved in Even Start. Let me tell you that I never imagined how much it would help me. It helped my relationship with my children.*
>
> *I have a two year old and a five year old. I still remember about the times that they use to drive me crazy. Even Start has helped me to learn how to handle all those little problems with my children in the manner that teaches me to be a gentle parent for my children, without being rough or screaming at them.*
>
> *I can not say that I do not have problems any more, but I can say that the way I face them is completely different. Another way that it has helped me a lot is the way that I relate to other people especially friends. My attitude is more positive and happy now. Because it makes me happy to know that I am patient and a gentle person with my children and the rest of the people I talk to. I can say that Even Start not just helped me, but it changed my life.*
>
> *A mom in the world but a different one thanks to Even Start.*
>
> *Genoveva*

Maria in the Variety Day Home Even Start Program.

Maria is a 28 year-old Hispanic married woman with two children: Anthony is four years old and Richard is seven years old. Maria completed 9th grade in Mexico where she was born. She and her husband speak Spanish. Maria is a full-time homemaker staying home to take care of the children. The family makes about $10,000 to $20,000 a year.

Maria enrolled in Even Start in April 1998 to further her education to find a better job and to be able to teach her children. Maria is currently attending English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at Variety Day Home four days a week from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Anthony also attends the child care center when Maria attends ESL classes. He learns school readiness skills, such as numbers, colors, and small and large motor coordination. Maria also attends parenting education classes.

> ***Letter.*** *I started to come to learn English in May 1998. In the beginning I came with enthusiasm and with the desire to improve my self-esteem. I did not continue with my classes because I started to have problems with my husband. Later, I found out about the Even Start program. The individuals are professionals in this program I can trust them and they are very good to me. From the beginning, I started to feel comfortable because they encouraged me and advised me positively. My communication with my husband is better and I practice what they teach me. I am more mature and I know I am more intelligent.*
>
> *Before Even Start, my son Anthony wanted to be with me at all times. Now, he can stay with other people. He is learning in this program because advocates work with him while I learn English. For example, he can draw, paint, color, and count. He is more independent and he is learning new things.*
>
> *Richard is my other son. He was not able to express himself with others. He be-*

came upset very easily and did not have a sense of humor. I talked about my son's problems to one person in my English class. I followed her advice and now he is communicating better. He can express his feelings and that is important to me.

The English class and the people in this program are helping me very much. I can help my children with their homework and I learn something new every day. Also I have a better future and I will enroll in a program to be a Child Development Associate. I will learn the development of the physical and mental abilities of children. As a mother, I feel very good because I have improved my self-esteem.

Sincerely,

Maria

Chapter IX. Conclusions

The conclusions of the Final Evaluation Report focus on what has been learned about the implementation and impact of Even Start projects at this early stage in program development. Overall, the projects have laid the foundation for the program (e.g., providing adequate staff training) and are providing important and needed services to families, adults, and children. In addition, perhaps most importantly, Even Start positively impacted program participants in early childhood development, adult literacy, and parenting skills. These statements are based on several conclusions we discovered about the program development, implementation, and outcomes. They include—

- Data show that Even Start services are helping to improve parents reading and parenting skills and children's language development and school readiness. Even Start showed positive gains on all adult and child test measures with the majority of gains being moderate to large.

- Projects drew upon some effective research-based programs to develop services in parenting education and early childhood education. Although adopting an effective research-based program does not guarantee success, it does increase the likelihood that projects will provide quality services to their participants—and thus increases the chances of success.

- Projects provided adequate training to staff in the models the projects adopted and in family literacy so staff can offer quality services to families, adults, and children. An important task in developing an effective family literacy program is to ensure staff have the necessary skills to work in an integrated family literacy model. The seven Nevada Even Start Projects have achieved this objective.

- Projects recruited eligible families to participate in Even Start. Most families have multiple economic and social disadvantages (e.g., limited educational experience, limited English proficiency, low-paying career tracks) and can benefit from the services offered to them. Even Start adults have basic or beginning literacy levels,

and Even Start children are below their peers on key indicators of school readiness including auditory comprehension, expressive communication, and receptive vocabulary.

- For many families, Even Start appears to be the only structured opportunity to better prepare their children for school. Most children from Even Start families did not participate in any other preschool or toddler program before Even Start and most children are not now participating in any other program while in Even Start.

- Projects seemed to have established working relationships with collaborating agencies and partners even though projects still see developing collaborations as one the major challenges in developing and maintaining an Even Start program. Collaborators and partners provide some of the required services in the three core service areas—primarily in adult education services.

- Even Start adults and children seemed to have been adequately screened by most projects so they are placed in and receive appropriate services.

- Most projects offer a sufficient number of scheduled hours of adult education, parenting education, and early childhood education to positively impact Even Start adults and children. The number of scheduled hours, however, is below the average number of scheduled hours of many similar projects in the national Even Start program. This fact suggests that Even Start participants will have to attend the existing scheduled program activities regularly to realize expected outcomes.

- Projects have retained a large percentage of the families who enrolled in Even Start since they began to provide services, i.e., January to April 1998, even though retention is seen as a major barrier to program implementation. This suggests families are satisfied with the services they are receiving.

- Some of the main barriers projects encountered when developing and implementing their programs included recruiting eligible families, coordinating with other

programs, improving the retention and motivation of participants, and improving participant attendance.

It is important to remember that the seven Nevada Even Start projects are in their first year of implementation. Most first-year program evaluations, rightfully so, are process evaluations that focus on program implementation. The overall conclusion we can draw from the Final Evaluation Report is that most projects seem to be "on-track" to developing effective family literacy programs and that current Even Start families already benefit from these services. The benefit of the program to families, although already evident, will be most accurately determined after the projects have additional time to refine program operations and fine-tune services.

The challenges these projects face are to continue to select families who can benefit most from the program and who are motivated to improve their lives, to provide high quality services to them, and to remove barriers to participation so that families can achieve their goals.